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All Quiet on the Dole

The time to denounce unemployment is when the 'seasonally adjusted' figures show it to be marginal or on the decline. Then it is possible to talk of Walter Greenwood and the rolling away of the dark clouds of the Thirties. When the statistics show a stubborn rise both in cyclical redundancy and hard-core unemployment, a great silence seems to descend over our spokesmen. With all his reputation for plain-speaking, Mr Healey does not care to emphasise that his standing at the International Monetary Fund depends on a certain willingness to 'shake out'. The new abrasive Tories do not make a point of their private and half-formed belief that a dose of the dole never did anyone any harm and may indeed be positively good for the moral fibre of the labour force. And the trade unions are too wedded to sectional interest to make anything but gestures in the direction of work-sharing (at a time when the average male manual worker is putting in ten hours of overtime a week).

While all this top-level pussyfooting goes on, the number of hard-core out of work is increasing. In particular, the number of young workers standing idle has increased to emergency proportions since the last comparable recession in 1971. Excluding variables like school-leavers and students, one recent survey shows 300,000 under-25s without work. This represents a 50-per-cent increase over 1971 with – predictably – an 87-per-cent for young girls. It also gives the lie to those who would like to believe in unemployment as a regulator of declining industries and ageing work forces. It shows the result of a blitz on public services, with many essential provisions cut to the bone. It shows the long-predicted result of our ramshackle system of Further Education and Further Training, which is now in no position to cope with the number of youths dumped on the labour market. And it shows the outline of an incalculable social cost which we may have to start paying earlier than some politicians think. The first instalments are already being met in Brixton and Belfast.

In the steel industry itself, the picture is somewhat different. But even here an ominous tactic of the last recession is being tried again. The British Steel Corporation is certainly faced with over-capacity and overmanning, but its solution – to close certain plants and move capital equipment to the low-cost centres – could well enhance short-run profitability at the price of a future shortage of labour and lack of capacity. If Mr Healey's promised upturn does ever materialise, then the ability of recession to turn profit into loss could become the propensity for boom to convert cost-cutting into capacity shortage. Only by that time the groups of skilled workers and equipment would have been dispersed, and labour relations greatly embittered by mistrust. When a generalised attempt is made to reduce manning levels and expected pay-packets, it is those workers with transferable skills and high levels of experience who are able to find work elsewhere, leaving the less fortunate to fester on social security. This is exactly what happened to the Coal Board last time and led to the desperate struggle to attract back the lost generation of miners.

There are certainly areas of production, and textiles are the standard example, where advances in technique and the pressure of foreign competitors and substitutes make a 'run-down' inevitable. For that matter, there was no serious objection to the closing of worked-out coal-mines. But to lay waste sectors of industry in response to short-run fluctuations of the trade cycle is folly.

In Opposition, Mr Wilson made rather a staple of stressing the word 'deliberate' while attacking the Tory creation of a reserve army of labour. Now that his own achievement has so far outstripped theirs, he would no doubt prefer it if people reverted to thinking of unemployment as an act of fate. But as he once remarked when the figures were somewhat lower (and someone else's responsibility): 'If there had never been a case for socialism before, automation would have created it. It is a choice between the blind imposition of technological advance, with all that means in terms of unemployment, and the conscious planned use of scientific progress.' If Labour wants a cooperative response from the unemployed it must make good on its pledges.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

What Ulster Debate?

I had been intending to kick off with a description of Monday's Northern Ireland debate, which I had imagined would be a dramatic affair. It was not a dramatic affair. The heat was off with a vengeance, and the turn-out was low. An average of 20 sprawling MPs graced the Labour benches. By the time Sir Nigel Fisher had spoken this number was considerably reduced. Sir Nigel's analysis will give some idea of the level of political discussion:

> I cannot help feeling that the basic position of the Ulster Unionists in opposing any coalition is unhelpful and uncompromising. I accept that they have a logical democratic argument, but it has never been possible to apply logic to the reactions of Ireland – or of women! Emotions matter much more. Rex Harrison in *My Fair Lady* bewailed: 'Why can't a woman be more like a man?' But they are not. It is just as unreal to demand that the Irish should be treated in the same way as the more logical English. I know about this on both counts because I am married to an Ulster woman.

Shortly afterwards the Liberal spokesman, Mr Alan Beith, addressed slightly fewer than five inert, somnolent, socialist bodies. What has Labour been doing over the Christmas holidays?

The debate was a triumph of consensus. There were no shouts of 'Resign' or cries of 'Withdraw', no wild cheers, no outraged interventions from the back benches. There was no division. From time to time a murmur of 'Hear, hear' wafted up to the packed galleries from the sparsely populated floor, but it was not a distinct 'Hear, hear', more a sort of 'Nyurdle, nyurdle', as if some enormous stomach was dealing with an enormous meal. It was an occasion for congratulations, six and a half hours of monotonous backslapping. By ten o'clock practically every speaker had been decorated for the courage of his views. Mr James Wellbeloved was the only one to come away from the tombola without a prize.

And *that* was something of an achievement. Mr Wellbeloved missed out on the awards because he raised the possibility of total withdrawal from Ulster. Otherwise the praise was overflowing. For instance, Mr Stanley Orme, in winding up the debate, asked Mr James Molyneaux: 'Despite his doubts, does the hon. Member for Antrim, South, as leader of the UUUC in this House, support the Government and will he recommend his colleagues in Northern Ireland to attend a reconvened convention in February?' To this Mr Molyneaux replied: 'As a good parliamentarian, my view has always been that I would certainly urge my colleagues to operate the democratic processes and make full use of them.' An evasive reply? No. Mr Orme thanked the hon. gentleman for his 'forthright and courageous statement' and was sure that it would be useful 'in the Northern Ireland context'. Mr Kevin McNamara then showed that he was awake by asking Mr Orme:

> Will my hon. friend interpret that reply of the hon. Member for Antrim, South? I understand that one of the democratic processes is the right to say 'No'.

To which Mr Orme replied that Mr McNamara had not the advantage of having lived in Ireland for two years. He (Mr Orme) understood fully what Mr Molyneaux was saying.

That was one of the more exciting moments (and it transpired that Mr Orme was right). Although I am told that the speeches were of a rather higher standard than in previous debates on Northern Ireland, what struck me most about them was their prolixity. It didn't matter if a point had already been made that evening. It didn't matter if some sentiment was a commonplace. It didn't matter if the speaker had absolutely nothing to say. Everything was in order as long as the brow occasionally furrowed, men of good will were invoked and the armed forces were praised.

Here is one of the new generation of Labour MPs, Mr Martin Flannery (b. 1918), at his most astute:

> What made the violence begin all over again after the interval? It was precisely because there were two communities. The position is similar to that which many of us who were soldiers in India witnessed among Hindus and Muslims, who were always condemning each other. I remember in India during the war, between battles, chairing a brains trust which included Hindu and Muslim officers. It was difficult to get them to agree among themselves –

At this point Mr Paisley smiled, sending the speaker into such a fit of fury that we never heard the end of the brains trust story, or why the Hindus and Muslims resembled Catholics and Protestants, or which resembled which. Mr Flannery condemned Mr Paisley for smiling:

> A smile cannot change the reality of the lack of democracy in Northern Ireland. The only hope for peace is democracy.

Quite so, quite so. Peace and democracy. The only trouble was that, to the Loyalist MPs, democracy was precisely what they were after, and they had been brought up in the belief that democracy meant majoritarian rule, which was what they were not being allowed.

It was Mr Heath, Mr Bronzed-and-Fit, who best articulated the two themes of the day, and, with Mr Paisley, gave one of the most convincing performances of the debate. Mr Heath, now that he is a statesman rather than a politician, can rise above party differences, be generous to his opponents and, where appropriate, be frank about his past errors. He defers and is deferred to. He dips into the store of his experience, and hands out advice in such a way that one quite forgets what things were like when he was at the helm of state. I would certainly buy a used car from this man. I'd buy three. I wouldn't even check that they had wheels.

We have reached the position, Mr Heath said, that Mr Heath had feared and foreseen all along. There was, simply, a head-on collision between Westminster and the majority of the Convention:

> The Secretary of State emphasised the areas of agreement. Yes, there were many areas of agreement, but that agreement was dependent on one thing – that all the major parties in Northern Ireland should take part in Government administration at all levels. Without this there is not any agreement.

So on the one hand Mr Heath was in favour of an insistence which he knew to be unpopular with the Protestants. On the other hand, he declared that the time was now ripe for a further security crackdown – more soldiers, more searches, more weapons for the army. He had read with interest, as I suspect Mr Rees had read with interest, the article in the *Guardian* of 17 December, in which an anonymous soldier had called for extra military support in South Armagh. Some of the things that the soldier had called for had already been granted. Mr Heath requested that the remainder (including mines and more powerful weapons) be given. In other words, while remaining adamant against the Protestants, Mr Rees should conduct the equivalent of Operation Motorman against the Republican sanctuaries. And everyone agreed that Operation Motorman had been a success.

There was a suspicion in the Labour Whips' office that Mr Paisley might possibly try to force a division, so by the end of the evening a few MPs began to return. They had been watching television, and we were told (twice) that a member of a paramilitary organisation had just said that whereas 1975 had been the year of the politicians, 1976 would be the year of the paramilitary groups. You could see why there had not really been any debate. There was nothing for Westminster to debate about. The debate was going on elsewhere, in the ruined streets, in the lodges and clubs, in the bleak, lethal countryside – in another country, perhaps.

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John P. Mackintosh

Labour and Scotland

For the first time in modern history, there is now something called Scottish politics which has a life of its own. Anyone wanting to take part has to read the Scottish press: both there and on television, seen only in Scotland, people make statements, answer each other and new positions emerge. It is hard, even for those MPs who live in Scotland and participate in the whole exercise, to be sure what is happening but it is clear that the old political loyalties are fading.

The immediate situation is that both the Labour and Conservative Parties are divided as to how far they should go on devolution, the Liberals have lost virtually all influence and though the proportion of voters in the opinion polls who want independence has stuck at 20 per cent, the Scottish National Party (SNP) has picked up enough support to give it the largest following in the country (at 37 per cent to 30 per cent Labour and 24 per cent Conservative). Indeed, if the swing to the SNP revealed at recent regional by-elections took place at a general election, the result would be 53 Nationalist seats, 11 Labour, four Conservative and three Liberal.

Why should the Labour Party be in confusion and losing ground when it is the only party advocating what the bulk of the people want, for the full SNP policy is supported by only a minority while Tory policy is so obscure that no one can make out their actual position except that they are unhappy about creating any effective government in Edinburgh?

There are a series of answers, some of which are of long standing, while others are more immediate. The deeper cause of the malaise is that in Scotland the Labour Party has been dying on its feet for many years. In West Central Scotland, the Labour Party was always the pragmatic, vote-getting machine, while the fire and idealism went into the old ILP. When the ILP disappeared, it left a party which was more an organisation for holding on to municipal power in Glasgow than anything like an ideological force. The Highland radical tradition could have been tapped and there were times since the war when all the Highland seats could have been won.

The dependence on the Clydeside base has given the Labour Party an increasingly old-fashioned working-class image at a time when affluence has tended (especially in the more prosperous East of Scotland) to blur class images a little. This, and the long-standing opposition of the Labour leadership in Scotland to such liberal causes as divorce law reform, reform of the licensing laws and free contraceptive aids on the Health Service, meant that the party had little appeal to other sections of the community, to the young or to the progressive elements in the professions. Even the massive patronage available to any Secretary of State was not used to appoint lively people.

As a result, the Labour Party in Scotland has aged and lost dynamism. Its one absorbing interest has been jobs (saving rather than creating jobs) and capital projects such as the construction of schools and houses. But the original idealistic vision of the kind of society socialists wanted, of the point of building schools and houses, tended to fade and now the social purpose of the party is far from clear.

At the same time, and partly because it has had no real life of its own, the Labour Party in Scotland has been a fief of the London leadership. Willie Ross, who has been Secretary of State or shadow Secretary since 1964, owes his position not to his support in Scotland (though this has been real in some quarters at some times) but to his loyalty to Harold Wilson. The Scottish regional organisers are not chosen by the Scottish Party but by the National

'Sir, the noblest prospect that a Scotchman ever sees, is the High Road that leads him to London.' (Samuel Johnson)

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Executive in London. Thus the curious situation was that when the Prime Minister and the NEC decided that, to stave off the Nationalists, the October 1974 election manifesto was to come out for devolution, they had to order Willie Ross and the Scottish Executive to do an about-turn – and this they duly did.

But, in consequence, the atmosphere in which the White Paper on devolution was prepared and launched was defensive and reluctant. In fact, the whole exercise of preparing the document could have been conducted as a kind of open seminar with all sectors of Scottish opinion being asked to contribute; all those interested in these plans could have been encouraged to look to the Labour ministers concerned. In practice, the process was shrouded in secrecy. Because the preparation was kept so tightly within government circles, the White Paper was written in a negative way designed to calm the fears of Whitehall civil servants and English cabinet ministers.

What was overlooked was that the one essential was to win the support of all those in Scotland who wanted a measure of devolution. The tactics should have been to rally these groups inside and outside the Labour Party and to drive a massive wedge between Labour as the party of devolution and the SNP as the party of separation. Unfortunately, this failed. The first thing in the White Paper is the quite unnecessarily elaborate subordination of the Assembly to the Secretary of State. Then there are all the powers to veto the Assembly's Bills to over-ride the Scottish Executive's non-legislative policies. As the pages are turned, nothing is unqualified. All housing is devolved except rents and aid for private house buyers. All education comes to the Assembly except the Scottish universities. All planning is devolved except the working of the Land Commission and any major planning disputes, and so on.

As a result, the White Paper was received with a howl of fury by the media, Jim Sillars, the able and popular MP for South Ayrshire, denounced the plan as a betrayal of the election pledge and the public were left with the impression that the Labour Party had let them down again. Even then, the position might have been retrieved had the White Paper been pushed with vigour and enthusiasm, but Willie Ross could not simulate sentiments he does not often possess, and certainly does not feel on this issue.

What can now be done to save the situation? For, if the Labour Party in Scotland continues to mishandle matters, and if voters who do not want independence nevertheless are driven into the arms of the SNP, this could lead to the end of the Union. The problem is to get the senior Labour leaders in London to realise the seriousness of the situation and the fact that they can no longer behave as if the Labour Party in Scotland was a wholly-owned subsidiary.

First, ministers must be selected for the Scottish Office on the grounds that they have some standing in Scottish political life and can bring credit and support to the party. They must also believe in the policy to which the party is committed. Neither Jim Sillars nor his new breakaway Scottish Labour Party should be persecuted. Their position must be trumped by the Labour Party granting its Scottish section autonomy (as has already happened in the Tory and Liberal parties; in party terms it is the logical consequence of devolution). Renamed as the Scottish Labour Party, this organisation must be set free to frame its own policies on Scottish affairs, appoint its own officials and its views should play a major part in Scottish ministerial appointments. Finally, the cabinet should look again at its decision to postpone the Devolution Bill till the 1976-77 session. The danger of this is that English opinion will become no better informed or more favourable while the Scots will have had months of discussion, all of which will have raised their expectations. The minimum devolution acceptable is moving forward all the time and meanwhile the general economic climate is doing nothing to make it easier for Labour ministers to hold their support, much less win back lost ground. There is not much time left.

David Haworth

The Ghost of New Years Past

At the EEC Paris summit in December 1974, when European Union hung round the conference room like an accusing ghost, that inevitable moment arrived when it was suggested someone should write a report on European Community political integration. There was no rush of eager volunteers. You do it. No, no, *mon cher*, I think you would be better. Before the luckless Leo Tindemans could also demur, he found he was being congratulated from all sides by relieved well-wishers.

A man who has learnt the art of Anglo-Saxon understatement – though surely not when he was a history pupil of Henry Kissinger's – the Belgian Prime Minister eventually produced what he described as his 'homework'. It was brief almost to the point of being terse and had none of the misty-eyed idealism which might have made it so vulnerable to attack from both Left and Right in the Community. Perhaps the Tindemans report is the nearest equivalent the EEC could produce to what Whitehall jargon describes as a White Paper with green edges – that is, something well within the bounds of political possibility and in itself desirable.

It must be strongly doubted whether the report will lead to the 'great debate' which Tindemans intended to provoke. The very phrase is a cliché. We all know what happened to a similar ambition in pre-referendum Britain, but those exchanges at least gave the possibility of a British rejection of the Community. While he concedes that 'public opinion is extremely sceptical about the will to establish a genuine European union and solve our real problems at the European level', he is adamant that such opinion allows for no second thoughts about the goal of 'European' integration. Well, he may be right. Certainly Tindemans was thorough in his research and it is equally clear the report broadly reflects the near-unanimity of the evidence he collected. The French Communist Party leader, M. Georges Marchais, was the only person to refuse discussion with the Belgian *rapporteur*. Tindemans also recalls some political shin-kicks in Copenhagen and a vociferous Dublin post-graduate who challenged the whole premise on which the report was prepared.

Debate or not, the commonsense Tindemans style hurries forward with such conviction that at first reading it is hard to detect the snags. On two issues Tindemans has laid a welcome mat over an open manhole: the two-tier concept of the EEC, and his proposals for adjusting the delicate power balance between the Community institutions.

The European Commission President, M. François-Xavier Ortoli, quickly detected the threat of a struggle between the EEC Council, Parliament and Commission – that each will try to interpret the report to its own advantage. The Tindemans suggestion that the Commission should share, with a directly-elected European parliament, the right to initiate new policies was poorly received by commissioners. 'I attach particular importance to the Commission's right of initiative,' M. Ortoli snapped last week, and opined that this right had largely contributed to the EEC's 'institutional stability' in recent years, a stability which had been maintained despite the Community's economic difficulties. This right of initiative Mr Tindemans wants vested in the Parliament is not clearly defined in the report. Officials here point out that it is a right the Parliament already theoretically possesses. But the Council of Ministers can – and does – overrule Parliament. Until it is elected by universal suffrage, it is regarded in most EEC capitals as useful merely as a sounding board – a totem institution shuttling in removal vans between Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

The Commission President fears it might suit some governments (the French and British?) to downgrade the political importance of the Commission by agreeing

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that the Parliament should become a kind of in-built opposition within the Community. It was De Gaulle's successful ambition to reduce the Commission's role: indeed, it has never recovered the status it lost during the Sixties as a result of his attacks. The relative insignificance since then of commissioners in terms of their national politics is a reflection of this. Worthy though they may be, Mr George Thomson and Mr Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza were never giants in their own parliaments. Chancellor Schmidt last year called for a commission of 'strong men' who could give the EEC a leadership which the Council of Ministers often fails to provide, but shows no disposition to follow his own advice, having nominated Herr Guido Brunner, a former spokesman of his foreign affairs ministry.

As for a two-tier Community, the question is rather like the one about beating your wife. Do you want to be a second-class nation? The answer, of course, is 'no'. A principal argument for both Britain and Ireland joining the EEC was that – in due time – the Community could provide a framework in which economic recovery was possible. The original challenge of the two-tier concept was thrown down by Willy Brandt – and received a large raspberry from the Commission, among others. But Tindemans prides himself on his pragmatism almost as much as Wilson does. There is no early prospect, despite all the claims made about North Sea oil, of Britain attending International Monetary Fund talks in anything but sackcloth. For other causes Ireland will be 'disadvantaged' until at least the end of the decade. Tindemans reasons that this may as well be recognised and should not prevent countries like Germany and France from making what economic progress they can.

This is undeniably a realistic view. It is also, unfortunately, a strategy which could fundamentally undermine the whole philosophy of the Tindemans report. In this respect it argues against itself. Any formal, as opposed to tacit, recognition that the EEC convoy needn't wait for the stragglers is in fact to take a deeply pessimistic view of the Community. The practice would rapidly become a principle and what happens then to Community *esprit* on which Tindemans seems to set so much store? It is not too fanciful to imagine 'two-tier' sessions of the Council of Ministers in which the business of one has less and less bearing on that of the other, particularly when finance ministers meet. It is a 'principle' which could have the most profoundly divisive consequences for the Community, and moreover one which would be reinforced rather than weakened when the question of the Community's enlargement arises – as it is bound to do – in the future.

Tindemans has been asked why his report didn't include any reference to devolution. He treated it as a joke: as Premier of the most divided nation in the community, he wasn't going to be caught out like that . . . he insists there will be no political difference in his follow-the-economic-leader strategy between, say, Germany and Britain, or Germany and Italy. But only a seasoned Belgian politician could make a proposition of that kind and hope to get away with it.

Brussels

Alexander Cockburn

The Barefoot Boys of Wall Street

Over lunch in down-town Manhattan the other day a vice-president of one of the largest banks in the world sketched out to a reporter – off the record – his basic thinking about the presidential election of 1976 and the politics of the next four years. He was, he said, more or less resigned to the election of a 'moderate' or 'conservative' Democrat next November. Ford was a blundering ass, and Reagan altogether too unreliable a political figure. So, in this upcoming Democratic term he predicted more attacks on business, more erosion by Congress of corporate liberty.

But towards the end of the decade, in 1978, he foresaw another severe recession or slump: conditions, in fact, amounting to what he called 'economic chaos'. And in 1980 he prophesied, to use his exact words, the arrival of 'the Man on a White Horse'. It was clear that he did not regard this impending crusader as a hostile element. To judge from other allusive comment about the importance of a 'professional army' he saw him as leading the great business counter-attack against the actual and imagined defeats of the past 25 years.

Now American businessmen have always honed a fine edge to their apocalyptic rhetoric, so there is no need as yet to start peering about for the Great Horseman of the 1980s. But the resentment expressed by the banker at what he perceived to be the political context in which business is operating was real enough. And looking at recent political history one can see why. In PR terms these have not been happy times for business.

The Watergate scandals unleashed a flow of corporate executives, trudging in and out of committee chambers on Capitol Hill,

testifying to complex feats of illegal political funding. Stirring itself, in the wake of such confessions, the Securities and Exchange Commission has revealed, either through straightforward litigation or leaks to the press, further chicanery – by such firms as Gulf Oil and United Brands. Senator Frank Church's sub-committee investigating multinational corporations has had other high corporate executives writhing in the witness chair. On the West Coast the collapse of C. Arnholt Smith's financial empire, on the East the failure of the Franklin National Bank – both amid charges of criminal fraud – further reduced the moral stature of bankers and financiers in public esteem.

Free from actual accusations of criminal behaviour, previous demigods in the American corporate firmament have been reeling amid the recession. Most conspicuous here are evidently the auto companies – General Motors, Chrysler, Ford and AMC. And this reduction in respect was startlingly exemplified only last weekend by a front-page report in the *Washington Post* that the second and third largest banks in the world – First National City and the Chase Manhattan – are both on a 'danger list' secretly maintained by the Comptroller of the Currency.

Any businessman is ready to suggest the banks he would gracefully describe as 'being on the edge', saved only from disaster by the generosity of the Federal Reserve. But the actual naming of specific banks regarded by Federal authorities as imperilled has never previously occurred, and is indeed illegal. The *Post*'s story was an earnest of the new insolence, and provoked bellows of outrage from the bankers. 'It's worse than the Ellesberg case', shouted the head of the First National Bank of Boston.

This reduction in respect for business has been paralleled by increasing irreverence in Congress. It is now politically quite safe for most liberal Democrats to suggest the break-up of the large oil companies. Legislation to terminate the off-shore tax benefits of multinational corporations is seriously entertained. Oil depletion allowances came under successful assault last year.

More far-reaching legislation is even more perturbing for business. Banking committees in Congress have been seriously toying with the idea of credit allocation, forcing banks to do such things – in the image of one senator – as putting loans into low-cost housing rather than gambling casinos in the Bahamas. Other legislation, proposing certain forms of national economic planning, has been suggested by such respectable Senators as Hubert Humphrey and Jacob Javits. Tangentially, many of the radicals of the 1960s have now – in more moderate garb – reached positions of legislative importance in state politics. Sam Brown, formerly a radical and now the State Treasurer of Colorado, calls for Colorado funds to cease being funnelled into the New York money markets and instead

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fruitfully invested much closer to home.

It is unfortunate, in these hard times, that the politicians friendly to business and presently in office should so signally demonstrate their affiliations. President Ford makes no secret of the fact that his intimates include the head of US Steel and the chief Washington lobbyist of Procter and Gamble. William Simon, Secretary of the Treasury, came from the prominent New York Bond trading house of Salomon Brothers and flaunts his old firm's tie with indiscreet abandon. Alan Greenspan, chairman of Ford's Council of Economic Advisers, is a stated devotee of the writings of Ayn Rand and has solemnly insisted that, as a class, the brokers of Wall Street suffered most in the recession.

The discontent and alarm felt by businessmen has, throughout the last year, been encapsulated in one phrase, or rather one slogan – the 'capital shortage'. The slogan, and the campaign behind it, was launched early last year by the Chase Manhattan Bank and the General Electric Company; it has subsequently received the imprimatur from William Simon and from most of the business press. Briefly, the thesis is that the United States will need about $4.5 trillion in new capital funds over the next ten years and that if this injection does not occur, unimaginable social turmoil will break out. Naturally enough, the corollary to the 'shortage' is a reduction of corporate income taxes by about $13,000m. and a bracing bout of depreciation write-offs for business.

The campaign goes further, suggesting that capital transfers to the social sector, growing over the past 40 years, are now paralysing American capitalism. 'We are now confronted', Mr Willard Butcher, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank told the Economic Club of Chicago last year, 'with the spectre of new government policy and action that could cripple our capital markets even further. Among the more mindless measures . . . a Bill to allocate credit toward . . . low and middle-income housing . . . loans to state and local government, small business and agriculture . . .' Complaining about the new ethic of 'equality of condition' rather than 'equality of opportunity', a Wall Street professional investor last week said such a trend heralded a 'chronic capital shortage: equality will not only take the form of diverting wealth from the rich towards the poor . . . so long as we have this equality bit, neither the country nor the stock market will go anywhere to speak of.'

So the business platform is an onslaught on social spending and the liberal excesses associated with Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society' programmes. In this context it is startling that no declared Democratic candidate – with the exception of Fred Harris – has run on opposite lines, attacking the corporations and the economic disasters of seven years of Republican rule. Only Frank Church, now declaring his candidacy, is likely to do this. The problem for businessmen, as indicated by the banker quoted at the start of this article, is that Ford and Reagan are both, for different reasons, unsatisfactory. Two Texans would have been infinitely preferable. Senator Lloyd Bentsen would have made an admirable candidate for business, but his campaign had faded. Even better would have been former governor and former Treasury Secretary, John Connally. Tainted with an indictment, though cleared by a jury, he is still waiting his time to join the race. And many businessmen feel that 'Big John' would make the best candidate of all.

New York

K. S. Karol

The World's Greatest Number Two

The man who next to Mao Tse-tung himself did most to create Communist China has left it with a problem as great as any he surmounted in his long career – the task of replacing his almost irreplaceable talent as the great mediator between the power factions within the Chinese Communist Party and the architect of China's relations with the outside world.

Chou En-lai played a vital role in the Chinese party for half a century without a break and without the slightest eclipse. No other leader, not even Mao Tse-tung himself, could boast of such a continuous and prominent career, in itself proof of his indispensability to his political comrades. But, apart from a brief spell in the Thirties, he was never the Number One of his party. He rose to the top of the party before Mao, and by a more conventional route, with the approval of the Comintern. But, in 1935, at the start of the Long March, he supported Mao's candidature as chairman of the party and thereafter never dreamed of contesting Mao's pre-eminence.

Yet in every way he himself was equipped to take over the leadership. His political education had been much wider, thanks to his travels abroad: to Japan, France – where he established bonds of friendship with Ho Chi Minh, his 'elder brother' – and above all to Moscow. Sometimes the soldier, sometimes the negotiator, Chou En-lai was no mere executive who needed to feel the protection of a more prestigious superior.

All the evidence of his stature was there: Chou En-lai always spoke with the calm assurance of a top leader, capable of dealing on the spot with any problem however delicate and who never went back on his word. I had the chance to confirm this during our three long conversations; first of all, in Algiers, in 1963; later in Peking, during the six months that I spent in China, in 1965 and in 1971. Very aware of his personal charm, he knew how to turn a conversation, interspersed with jokes and anecdotes. He never hid behind the blurring diplomatic formulations: 'The Chinese CP wishes this', 'The party will do that'. His manner of expression never left any doubt about his power of decision.

With Edgar Snow, the American who was a friend of both Mao and Chou, we often discussed, particularly during the cultural revolution of 1966-69, the bond which had been established between these two exceptional men. Both told Snow their personal stories of the days in the caves of Pao An in 1936, but without touching on the problem of their respective roles within the party. But they said enough for their confidant, the future author of *Red Star Over China*, to deduce that Chou gave first place to Mao after realising that he alone had 'ideological genius' and that he alone was capable of devising the strategy of the Long March and, later, that of the Chinese socialist revolution.

According to Snow, Chou convinced Mao that *he* knew all about the Comintern general staff and the group of 28 Bolsheviks set up in Moscow to direct the Chinese CP. On that front, there was only dogmatism and no 'genius'. In 1965, when the Chinese Republic was celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of Mao's ascendancy to the leadership of the party, Chou En-lai told me, in a sarcastic tone, in confirmation of Snow's analysis, that the Communist International had merely been a tool in the hands of the Soviet Communist Party and that it had never been capable of creating a proletarian revolution anywhere.

But it was in tackling a new problem, resulting from Mao's determination to establish 'another Communism', radically different from that in Soviet Union, that Chou En-lai had to fight his toughest battles from 1966. By questioning the relations between the governors and the governed, by inviting the great mass of Chinese to 'take the nation's affairs in hand' and to 'bombard headquarters', Mao Tse-tung raised problems that no prime minister who had held office for 17 years could regard with any enthusiasm. However, in contrast to the 'traditionalist' Liu Shao-chi, Premier Chou En-lai, as in 1935, had the political intelligence to follow his leader and put himself in the front line against bureaucratic ossification and the 'revisionist danger'. He donned the uniform of the Red Guards, took part in all the mass rallies in Tien An-men Square, and put all his incomparable talents as a mediator at the service of the rival Maoist factions. And, in the middle of this turbulent innovation, he also kept an eye on the economic machine to ensure that it didn't stop functioning, and that the militants didn't forget 'to make revolution and improve production'.

In 1971, long after the great wave of confrontation had ebbed, when China was seeking to consolidate the political victories of the preceding years, I saw Chou En-lai during the May Day celebrations, modestly mounting the platform in Tien An-men Square, well behind Mao Tse-tung and Lin Paio. But when the fireworks were at their most spectacular it was round him that one sensed the greatest optimism and gaiety. This was the hour of China's entry on to the world scene, of her resumption of relations with the outside world, including the United States, of her triumphal penetration

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of the United Nations and the Third World. This massive and successful enterprise was directed by Chou En-lai, following the directives of Chairman Mao but with a personal *brio* which established him as one of the great men of this century, an unequalled master in the art of diplomacy and human relations.

His interest in people and foreign countries was only equalled by his Communist conviction and his unshakeable principles. He had an iron faith in world revolution and the coming transformation of China into a powerful modern socialist country, before the end of the century. It was towards this goal that he followed his chairman and friend Mao Tse-tung to the end, with the deepest conviction and considerable modesty. He will not be easy to replace. And the grief which his death has brought to Communist China is shared today by all those who have not forgotten what we owe to this man, one of the greatest protagonists of social emancipation for a quarter of humanity and of a revolution which affects the destiny of us all.

Roger Woddis

Death of a Queen

(Dame Agatha Christie, 1890 - 1976)

She murdered hundreds but did little harm,
Kept us guessing, helped us to escape,
Worked at her trade, dug privately for pleasure,
Wrote stories with a satisfying shape,
Went down with dons and deckchairs on the beach.
She spun a yarn. She had no urge to preach.

Gently bred, this shy, retiring flower
Preferred the trowel to the stabbing knife,
Devoted daughter of a rich New Yorker
('He never did a hand's turn in his life').
Dispensing poisons, jokey now and then,
She made a fortune and laid down her pen.

Poirot still lives, although she killed him off,
The light still lingers in the little grey cells;
Miss Marple potters round the vicarage,
English as murder and cathedral bells.
Ackroyd and *Styles*, *Orient Express* –
Names that will stand as long as men confess.

More widely read than Shakespeare, figures show:
A hundred books, three hundred million sold,
The Mousetrap, like the poor, always with us;
She has passed on but still retains her hold.
Though as a writer not especially good,
Her greatest crime: she was understood.

Fiction is fiction, life is something else
And more than a mysterious affair:
Puzzle, suspense, dénouement and curtain.
Today's untidy, and solutions rare.
Whodunnit? The scene is muddied with false clues.
The crimes we know but not whom to accuse.

In the Winter Number of **OUT NOW!**

Universities Quarterly

CULTURE, EDUCATION & SOCIETY

F. R. Leavis, b. 1895: 'Stability and Growth'

A tribute to the on-going work of Dr F. R. Leavis

ON BEING F. R. LEAVIS'S PUBLISHER Ian Parsons

'The number of times I've had occasion, over the last 40 years, to ask him to clarify a passage could be counted on the fingers of two hands.'

SOCIETY AND EDUCATION IN CAMBRIDGE 1902-1922 Eric Warmington

'One of these dramas was *Macbeth* of which Cook staged Act 2 in 1912 . . . the part of the villain-hero was taken by a quiet boy who later became . . .'

WHY LITERARY CRITICISM MATTERS IN A TECHNOLOGICO-BENTHAMITE AGE Andor Gomme

'No-one has made us realise more powerfully than Leavis how inconceivable is community without language or language without community.'

LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY Michael Tanner

'It is characteristic of Leavis to be engaged in critical theory, or aesthetics, a very great deal of the time. It isn't his fault if most people don't notice the fact.'

LEAVIS AND CREATIVITY David Holbrook

'. . . a certain failure to find anything to believe in, in explicit debatable terms, outside the practice of teaching and the analysis of texts, beyond "English".'

A KIND OF VALEDICTION: LEAVIS ON ELIOT Michael Black

'Through Leavis's long wrestling with Eliot: his patience in a way, but also his occasional impatience, his mixture of admiration, gratitude, asperity, his unflinching attention, a more human poet does emerge'.

ATTENTION TO EDUCATION Fred Inglis

'We can speak in retrospect, of Leavis and *Scrutiny* putting into circulation a strong and attractive politics of education. Small wonder that so many of his pupils have been active in education and have found the education system about them increasingly bleak and desolate.'

PLUS

THE EDUCATION OF MINISTERS OF STATE Alec Merrison

'. . . Lord Crowther-Hunt's emphasis on manpower planning . . . I believe he is right to insist that such calculations should be done, but that he is wholly wrong to think that they are not done already, and to think that any remarkable illuminations are waiting to be discovered here.'

UNESCO IN CRISIS – THE ISRAEL RESOLUTIONS Richard Hoggart

'The recent "Israel resolutions" have provided the biggest challenge in the Organisation's history . . . they mark an accelerated, planned and strong politicization of the Organisation *at the expense of* any serious attempt at objectivity.'

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David Leitch

Giscard and the Ladies

Madame Alice Saunier-Seïté, it is safe to assert, bears a name few French citizens outside her immediate family circle could identify, let alone spell, with any measure of confidence. But for reasons that will become apparent she suddenly found herself saying good-bye last week to the anonymity of a solid career in the provinces.

No wonder she seemed dazzled by the national spotlight. Reporters badgered her for instant views (Feminism? 'Well, yes . . .') and even instant policies (Higher Education? 'Naturally, what with rising costs . . .') For a dizzy moment it seemed she would be reduced to confessing that, like Calvin Coolidge, she was against sin.

And only 24 hours earlier she had been pursuing her lawful occasions administering the University of Rheims and probably handling faculty boards like a charm. (Since she actually speaks the French language with a distinct English accent, we can take it her antecedents are impeccable.) It may be this is why she caught President Giscard's eye; anything is possible. In any case here she was, a key card in the newly reshuffled pack, as Giscard performed his political Happy Families trick for the sixth time since he came to power in May 1974.

At first glance the object of the exercise seemed obscure, except perhaps as a reminder of the famous election slogan 'Giscard at the helm'. For in contrast to General de Gaulle, who never condescended to soil his hands with the nuts and bolts of domestic government, or even Georges Pompidou, who at least preserved a myth of separation between presidential affairs conducted at the Elysée and those of the prime minister revolving round the Hôtel Matignon, there is no longer any pretence that the government led by Jacques Chirac is in any real sense his own creation. Giscard both proposes and disposes, and it is Giscard who appears on the *petit écran* to explain what he has done, and why.

When in due course the President began his radio and television explanations – the well-honed media personality a stark contrast to the new girl thrown in at the deep end – a picture began to emerge. In the first place, he explained, his new government was now indisputably bigger than the old one (43 members against 38). It was also younger (average age 48.5 years against 51). At this point it was easy to see why the French socialists had put out an announcement declining to comment on the changes since it scarcely seemed worth the effort to add to the propaganda surrounding what François Mitterrand's secretary had unkindly characterised as 'a semi-event'. But then the President produced what was evidently meant to be the bull point for news editors and the reason why Rheims had lost a university administrator and Paris had gained a (woman) minister was clear for all to see.

There were not only more women of ministerial rank in the new government, he continued: five instead of four to be precise. France was now in a position to claim 'the highest quotient of female participation of any government in the world'.

So accustomed have veteran Giscard watchers become to the general statement immediately followed by a set of figures proving its validity, and incidentally emphasising that there is no politician more at home when it comes to decimal points, that for a moment one expected more. Surely, through sheer force of habit, there would now be some percentile reinforcement, a comparison of France's 'female government participation' with, say, the UAR or Sweden, but no. He was, for once, content with unadorned, *ex cathedra* assertion. It was worthy of General de Gaulle himself, both in style and spirit.

In media terms the President was probably right to concentrate on the significance of Alice Saunier-Seïté, as the other changes were largely an exercise in political geometry. France, he continued, is now 'ruled from the Centre', or more precisely from the centre of those three anti-socialist parties which constitute the majority. The elevation of Jean Lecanuet, Minister of Justice, best known outside France as the candidate whose scoutmaster *gravitas* was just sufficient in the first 'television' election of December 1965 to deny an enraged General de Gaulle the absolute majority he had hoped for in the first electoral round, is part of this exercise. Now Lecanuet has become a 'super-minister', each of the three majority parties, or 'families' as they are now misleadingly called in Elysée jargon, have a representative in the triumvirate immediately below the President. He thus joins Chirac, the Gaullist, and Interior Minister Poniatowski, who comes from the President's old splinter group, the Independent Republicans. The removal from the cabinet of its two oldest members, Messrs Abelin and Jarrot, stems from an impulse as much actuarial as anything else.

It would be wrong to attach too much importance to these distinctly farcical manoeuvres taken in isolation. France's economic and social problems are as we know to our cost common to virtually everyone. It has been a feature of Giscard's government, despite the narrowness of his own presidential majority, that it conveyed a strong sense of technical competence and purpose. This winter has been the first time that observers of differing political sympathy have begun to agree in seeing not only a loss of governmental impetus but a kind of general *malaise* – the word French commentators have been accustomed to apply to our situation rather than their own.

President Giscard himself, once so sprightly, shows signs of being affected by the 'sense of collective pessimism' he himself diagnosed at the last cabinet meeting of 1975 which took place on 31 December in an atmosphere of unparallelled gloom. It was not, interestingly enough, the unemployment figures, now as well established as our own at over the one million level, that made him so despondent. His concern was provoked by the corrected census statistics.

They served to confirm a trend, a consistent and even accelerating fall in the birth-rate, which is again anything but an exclusively French phenomenon. However, for reasons which are partly historical, and partly simply a question of France's large land mass, a tendency which in West Germany, for example, is generally welcomed, has filled France with prophecies of what are now called 'demographic decline'.

This 'decline', then more often referred to as 'temporary check', first began to be discussed in 1972 when 875,000 births were registered in France. In 1973 there were only 855,000; in 1974 the number had reduced still further, and only just topped 800,000. The provisional total for 1975, discussed at this same ill-omened cabinet, is apparently now down to 740,000. It is ironic that such a trend should appear less than a decade after General de Gaulle and his advisers, Georges Pompidou not least among them, were in the habit of predicting a new European balance for the year 2,000 based on the idea that by then France might have attained a population of 100 million. (The current figure is just over 52.6 million, and forecasts suggest a fall by the end of the century to below 50 million.)

President Giscard left his cabinet meeting for the television studios. And with these considerations in mind he chose demography as the theme for his New Year message, reminding the viewers sternly: 'In 1800 France had a population that was three times greater than Great Britain's, and almost equal to Russia's . . .' Apart from the fact that for once he had got his figures wrong (the correct ones for 1800 as far as I can make out were France 28.3 million and England 16 million) it was, to put it mildly, an ill-judged theme. The older members of his audience were reminded of Adolphe Landry, the famous Minister of Labour of the 1930s, who dedicated himself to encouraging the French to breed, and also of a yet more ambiguous historical figure with similar demographic preoccupations, Marshal Pétain.

Nor was the subject matter Giscard's only miscalculation. In search of a gimmick not unlike this week's performance with the unfortunate Alice, the President sprang a surprise by bringing his wife, Madame Anne-Aymone Giscard d'Estaing, to appear with him, the idea no doubt being that this mother of four would serve as a symbol to encourage the country in a new year which the President said would be dedicated to 'the politics of the family'.

Since Madame Giscard is no more accustomed to television cameras than her husband's neophyte cabinet member, she gave an impression of nervous confusion. (One satirical commentary explained this by saying she was trying to remember who Giscard was, not having seen him for so long.) The inauguration of family politics was less than a triumph. It will be interesting to see how long the President's disastrous run continues.

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John Gretton

Death in Casablanca

A few days before Christmas Maître Omar Benjelloun, a 42-year-old Moroccan lawyer, was knifed to death as he was about to get into his car outside his house in Casablanca. I have not been to his home, but his office was in the rue de Paris. Except that it did not have a *porte-cochère*, the building could have been transplanted in the days when Morocco was a Protectorate: the dark stairwell off the gloomy hall, the heavily panelled and varnished doors, the undecorated smell were all reminiscent of the Vieille France bourgeoisie. Across the street, the café where we first met could also have come from the metropolis: the difference there is that it was 'dry', with green tea taking the place of alcohol, and that we could not talk there because of King Hassan's spies.

This was no case of armchair revolutionary paranoia. Maître Benjelloun was currently under sentence of death. He had been accused of plotting against the Crown Prince, but had been released *en liberté provisoire* with the charge still hanging over his head. That had been the third time he had been arrested and tortured since 1965. Short, dapper, cheerful, he was, he reckoned, the first person anybody had gone to the trouble of taking out to sea for the sole purpose of carrying out the water torture over the side of a ship.

Besides running a flourishing practice, Maître Benjelloun was a leading member of the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires, one of the few genuine opposition movements, and editor of its daily newspaper, *Al Mouharrir*. When he wasn't in the dock himself, he had been defending others in most of the political trials that have deformed the already ugly face of Hassan's regime. He upheld the liberal professional ethic that makes law and journalism risky professions in many countries; at the same time, he displayed a passionate revolutionary concern for the Moroccan masses, the rural misery and urban slums.

Yet such evidence as there is points to a sectarian murder rather than a straightforward political killing. His attacker, Mohammed Saad, is a cobbler and, by all accounts, a member of a fanatical religious movement which seeks not only to have everything taught in Arabic but to limit what is taught to the Koran. Certainly there is such a movement, a kind of right-wing nationalist backlash opposed both to King Hassan and to the more traditional left-wing opposition parties. But if so, one may well ask, why did the king not get in earlier? After all, if he wanted a semblance of legality, he had the trumped-up treason charge to hand.

And in the past Hassan has not always been so scrupulous. It is almost exactly ten years ago that another Moroccan lawyer, Mehdi Ben Barka, was kidnapped and murdered by King Hassan's henchman General Oufkir. The originality of that crime lay in the snook that Hassan cocked at De Gaulle. Ben Barka was kidnapped, with the connivance of two French policemen, outside the Lip restaurant on the Boulevard Saint Germain in the heart of Paris, taken to a house in the suburbs and there tortured and killed.

When Oufkir was 'suicided' in 1972, following an abortive coup against the king, Colonel Dlimi took his place as Hassan's right-hand military and security chief. Last year, when things began hotting up in the Western Sahara, he was in the South organising the support and logistics for the so-called 'green march'. Now that Spain has withdrawn all her army from the territory, Colonel Dlimi is installed in El Aaiun as commander-in-chief of the Moroccan army of occupation.

It is there, in what used to be called the Spanish Sahara, that lies the clue to Maître Benjelloun's *liberté provisoire*. Like the vast majority of Moroccans, Maître Benjelloun was firmly convinced that the Sahara belonged to Morocco as of right. Extreme left-wingers like Maître Benjelloun who supported the official line on the Sahara were more use to Hassan alive than dead, and free than in prison.

I had not seen Maître Benjelloun since the invasion of the Sahara began, but I suspect that he would even have approved of the way Hassan carried it out. To have the strength, as Hassan did, to leave the Spanish army the symbolic victory in the desert in order to grab the real goodies at the negotiating table – a brave, strong man himself, Maître Benjelloun would have appreciated that. De Gaulle was one of his heroes – 'he was a real man' (il avait du cran) and he won through in 1968 'because he showed himself a real man'. An error, that; it was in fact Pompidou who in 1968 saved France for one more year of De Gaulle. But the meaning was plain enough. Some of this admiration, though he would have hotly denied it, may even have rubbed off on to his enemy and torturer, Hassan himself.

In July 1973, Maître Benjelloun was arraigned before the military tribunal at Kenitra (where the American base is). He still carried the marks of the torture he had endured. But, he is reported to have said at his trial: 'I hold no bitterness against anybody, for it was a system that was torturing me and not people.' A far, far nobler way of showing he had *du cran* than that of either De Gaulle or Hassan – or, indeed, of that misguided cobbler who stuck the knife into him, twice, just before Christmas.

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Alan Watkins

The Political Columnist's Craft

'We are so made, we love to be pleased better than to be informed; information is, in a certain degree, mortifying, as it implies our previous ignorance; it must be sweetened to be palatable.' – Lord Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son* (1774), Letter of 11 February 1751.

Hugh Massingham, who in my opinion was the founder of the modern political column, was never a public figure. He did not participate as a 'political expert' or 'talking head' in radio or television broadcasts: partly because such programmes were in the 1940s and 1950s few and far between, partly because he had a stammer (though others have of course turned this and other oddities of speech to their advantage) but mainly because he regarded himself as a private person. His name was not printed even over the political column he wrote for the *Observer* between the end of the war and the early Sixties. He was 'Our Political Correspondent'. But though Massingham wrote mainly as 'Our Political Correspondent' he had, as he explained in an article he wrote in 1963, a personal and immediately recognisable style:

> When I came back from the war and was asked to be a political correspondent – a job I did not want – political journalism had reached about its lowest ebb. The writing was undistinguished. Political correspondents were hardly more than valets, rightly despised by their ministerial masters: day by day, and week by week, they took down the insipid views that were given them from on high. The idea that a political correspondent should have an honoured place in the community, that he should be independent, that he should defy the gods if need be – in addition, that he should sharpen his pen and model himself on Swift – had seldom occurred to anybody. There were exceptions, of course, but on the whole political commentators when I came back to civilian life were a poor lot. Certainly nobody treated them very seriously. It seemed to me that to be a valet was not the ideal job for a person who thought of himself more seriously then than he does now. I therefore set out to write something quite different. Some people have said that I created a new formula. In fact I went back to something as old as journalism. I went back to my father, one of the most powerful political commentators of all time [H. W. Massingham, editor of the *Nation* 1907-1923], and through him to the irreverent, laughing, sardonic denizens of Grub Street. This attitude naturally aroused the ire of the professionals on the Right and the Left of the House. To have a view of one's own, to treat them as if they were not sacred cows – what blasphemy!

As a general statement of what Hugh Massingham did for political journalism – and, as we shall see, he did a great deal – this passage is true enough. Nevertheless it needs some qualification and expansion. For a start, the end of the last war is scarcely a suitable time at which to slice a section of British political journalism and examine it under the microscope. There was a shortage both of newsprint and of newspapermen, many of whom were serving in the forces. There was a censorship both imposed and, more important, self-imposed. If we are trying to assess Massingham's influence it is more useful to look at the period immediately before the war. It is probably correct that at this time the lobby organisation of political correspondents was at its most influential. And in a way it was to this that Massingham objected; this which he had in mind when he wrote of 'valets' and 'ministerial masters'.

I say 'in a way' because Massingham did not object to the lobby organisation as such. He was not in any event a particularly assiduous attender anywhere at the Palace of Westminster. He preferred to do his work in restaurants, at his home in Vincent Square (where he had R. H. S. Crossman as a neighbour) or, more rarely, at the *Observer*'s office. Yet Massingham never broke lobby rules. Or rather, he did not break that rule to which lobby correspondents tend to attach the greatest importance. He did not reveal sources or quote politicians when he was not meant to quote them. He did not, in other words, see himself as someone who was out to break the system.

Indeed the system – at any rate as far as the non-attribution rule is concerned – is not peculiar to political journalism but general. It depends upon the common principle of human intercourse: 'I'll tell you what's going on if you promise to keep my name out of it.' Quite often, in fact, the principle works against the interests and also the desires of the politician concerned. He wants nothing more than to be mentioned, to be quoted, to have views of some description attributed to him. 'You can quote me on that, old boy,' he will say hopefully. Alas, he rarely is quoted, partly because what he has said may not be striking, original or even moderately sensible, but partly too because lobby journalists have grown into the habit of never quoting anybody.

The change that Massingham introduced was not of reporting convention or technique but of manner, tone, style. He refused to accept politicians at their own valuation. And the vehicle he used was the political column, quite short, of 800 words or so, and undivided into sections or items. He employed the normal lobby correspondent's argot, though even here elegance kept breaking through:

> It is difficult enough, as ministers have been sharply reminded in the last few weeks, to work out a detailed plan for a year ahead . . . The question is whether these methods will get the active cooperation of the rank-and-file of workers. Have they not been tried already? Would the Government, in fact, succeed along these lines even if it were able to give a guarantee of the Promised Land, sparkling with neon lights, crawling with charabancs, in four years from now? It is very doubtful. For nearly two years the Government has been issuing exhortations, edicts, proclamations, appeals, plans, promises and reproofs without any noticeable effect . . . The old trade union discipline has broken down, and . . . the TUC – distracted and bewildered – no longer dare advocate any changes which might offend some of its sections. Now and again, I understand, one of the bolder spirits has raised the question of a wages policy, and those dread words have had much the same effect as an oath dropped at a meeting of the Elders of the Kirk.

Truly everything changes, and everything remains the same. For if Massingham was no innovator in the technique of newsgathering, nor was he the first political columnist. He freely acknowledges this in the autobiographical passage quoted above. Yet one wonders not exactly whether he was being over-modest but whether he had read the past entirely right. In the 1930s the best-known columnists were foreign affairs experts – A. J. Cummings, for instance. Even if they were not experts, they devoted most of their time to agonising about foreign policy. Writing in parallel, so to speak, the foreign reporters – Sefton Delmer, F. A. Voigt, Hugh Greene, William Forrest, Vernon Bartlett – were read with an avidity withheld from their successors today.

It is not that the standard of foreign coverage has gone down. If anything, the case is the other way. It is rather that the 1930s were peculiarly obsessed by foreign affairs. Not only was the international situation menacing but the belief existed that Britain could do something about it. And the diplomatic correspondents, like the foreign reporters, had a position if not in society then at least in their own newspapers. Today the relative positions of the diplomatic and political correspondents have been reversed, owing partly to a decline in British power and to a consequential insularity but mainly to the disposition of prime ministers to take over control of foreign affairs – and then to continue to deal with those journalists whom they know, or can manipulate, best.

Massingham himself, moreover, rarely showed indignation, whether about topics of the day or about individual politicians

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A shortened version of a chapter on Hugh Massingham, from a book by Alan Watkins on politicians and the press, to be published by Jonathan Cape.

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His work was, on the surface, tolerant, sceptical, civilised, amused. If we are looking for an 18th-century parallel it is surely with Addison rather than with Swift. Such a style of writing can, unless handled with judgment and discretion, easily appear flippant, facetious, cynical. Or it can say by implication, as Addison after all said: 'This is the way of the world. Those who wander from it do so at their peril.' From this second fault, if it is a fault, Massingham was wholly free. In this regard the comparison with Addison breaks down. 'Whatever is, is right' was never among his maxims. He was more prone to the first fault – flippancy.

This was perhaps inevitable. There are some readers who demand solemnity on all occasions, especially if their own trade or profession happens to be involved. Journalists are as sensitive as anybody – worse, possibly, than politicians. But politicians are bad enough. It was natural that Massingham should have been accused from time to time of treating weighty matters with less than a due seriousness. But what is surprising is not how often but how seldom this accusation was made, and how much more seldom it was made with any kind of justification. With artistry, Massingham rarely strayed on the wrong side of the line that divides lightness of touch from a mere flippancy. Such discernment, such sureness of taste, is not wholly a matter of technique, craftsmanship, tricks of the trade. Values and beliefs also enter into the business.

Belief in the People

Massingham's convictions were never obtrusive but they were nonetheless strong. Like all radicals, from Charles James Fox to Aneurin Bevan, Massingham believed in the people. This belief is simpler to recognise than to define. It is easy to caricature and mock it, as Malcolm Muggeridge does, or to attack and denounce it, as do those who say: 'So you'd bring back hanging?' or: 'Then you really think that Enoch Powell ought to be Prime Minister?' Massingham's concern, however, was not so much to ask questions about populism and democracy as to avoid both sentimentality and statistical bloc-thinking.

He was not only the son of H. W. Massingham but the brother of H. J., naturalist and editor of the *Countryman*. He went to Westminster and started to write as a shipping clerk in Liverpool. He soon gave this up, however, and worked briefly for the *Manchester Guardian*. He then came to London, where he set himself up as an investigator of social conditions, going first to South Wales, then to the East End. The latter expedition produced the sub-Orwellian *I Took Off My Tie* (1936).

A novel he published in 1945, *The Harp and the Oak*, provides us with some useful signposts to Massingham's political attitudes – to his belief in the people, his relish for oddness and eccentricity, the delight he took in the overblown, the theatrical and the fake. But it is worth remarking that none of the various works of fiction he wrote is concerned either with politics in the narrow sense or with broader questions of social policy. He never attempted to write the great political novel. In his books, division bells do not ring imperiously, smooth black cars do not glide between Whitehall and the Queen Anne house in Berkshire, champagne is not sipped at embassy receptions, and the glib and unscrupulous journalist does not climb into bed with the under-secretary's wife. But then again, there is little in the books about the toilers in the field with whom he had such sympathy. We cannot go to his novels and catch that authentic atmosphere compounded of strong tea, dust and sticky labels, with the middle-aged ladies writing away at the folding tables, scribble, scribble,

scribble, like Gibbon himself, and the dusk gathering as the canvassers homeward plod their weary way.

Yet, there was no question about it, even as a political journalist he was different. The difference can perhaps best be expressed by saying that he carried with him a whiff of another world, gayer, more gossipy, more malicious even, certainly more frivolous, than that of Fleet Street or Westminster. What was it? Brighton, perhaps, or the theatre or old bohemian London. Not that Massingham was in the least loud, flamboyant or pushful. As a man he was notably shy. Yet his overcoat sometimes had a velvet collar, and he wore his grey hair long and with sideboards well before this became either fashionable or conventional. The photograph on the back cover of the Penguin edition of *The Harp and the Oak* shows a thin, apprehensive and somehow unhappy face. The picture may have been misleading when it was taken. Certainly it did not foretell Massingham in his later years.

His 'Helplessness'

He was a big man with a massive head which, because of his height, did not appear disproportionate. He generally seemed to be, not laughing, but smiling to himself. At party conferences or on other occasions when he was out of London he found difficulty with telephones, with the paraphernalia of journalism. Or he said that he did. Often people with a certain amount of charm, and Massingham had a lot of it, will exploit others, at any rate in small matters. Probably with Massingham there was both a real and a pretended helplessness, or a helplessness that had begun as partly assumed and ended as mainly real. James Margach of the *Sunday Times* remembers Massingham's difficulties in communicating with his office from a party conference.

> 'How do I get in touch with them in London, J-J-Jimmy?' Massingham asked.
>
> 'You see that little box over there?' said Margach. 'Well, you go into it, and pick up the receiver, and the girl on the hotel switchboard will ask you what number you want. You tell her, put the receiver down and wait in the box. Then in a few minutes she'll ring you back with the number you want.'
>
> 'But Jimmy, I don't *know* what number I want.'

Yet it would be wrong to conclude that he was inefficient or lacking in perception in the less physical aspects of newspaper work. For instance, David Astor remembers that when the *Sunday Times* began serialising the memoirs of generals and other notabilities Massingham was the first, virtually the only, member of the *Observer*'s staff to perceive the danger to the paper. He maintained that the *Observer* also should be carrying out the same improving work. His advice was not taken. Still, throughout most of this period, from the end of the war until the early Sixties, dealings between Massingham and his editor were harmonious enough, as these always delicate and often difficult relationships go. He would bring in his copy and wait apprehensively for Astor to smile. When the smile appeared, as it usually did at some point, Massingham would sit back, smile too, look benign, relaxed. He considered that part at least of his work was done. Nevertheless there were troubles. One of them concerned expenses:

> Lunch is an important occasion in a political commentator's life. It should, no doubt, be a rather pleasant interlude and so it is if one is on the staff of the *Daily Express* or the *Daily Mirror* – opulent newspapers, ruled by journalists who know the facts of life. Unfortunately, I had such a limited expense account that it would hardly have fed a sparrow . . . I was mostly paying for everything out of my own pocket.

What was more serious was that Massingham eventually became not so much disillusioned, for he was never illusioned, as simply bored. We have already noted his

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disposition to see politics as a form of theatre. Now, in the late 1950s, the exuberant men – Lord Woolton and Hugh Dalton – were gone. Aneurin Bevan had become a respectable figure and was shortly to die. Others who had provided Massingham with much gentle amusement – Clement Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps and Herbert Morrison prominent among them – were no longer part of the political play. R. A. Butler, true, was still present to provide delight with his crab-like movements and left-handed indiscretions, and for a time Massingham reposed the highest hopes in Lord Hailsham as a comic character almost in the Woolton class. 'There's this extraordinary Hailsham chap that I've discovered,' Massingham would say to Astor with glee. Alas, he was disappointed of his expectations. Hailsham let him down and became almost like any other politician. Things were not the same as in the old days of the Attlee government and the Bevanite revolt and the rows on the National Executive Committee when Dr Edith Summerskill's hat – one of the Massingham stock properties – would bob with a terrible fury and she would find herself quite unable to pronounce the horrid words 'Ian Mikardo', calling him 'that man in the brown suit' instead.

The Wigg Connection

And there was another aspect to Massingham's loss of interest. Astor decided that something different was called for from a weekly essay, however witty, elegantly composed or well-informed. Massingham had never been particularly interested in 'policy'. The idea of painstakingly guiding the readers of the *Observer* through, say, the latest White Paper on housing filled him with not the least enthusiasm. When negotiations to enter the Common Market began in 1961 he was appalled, and who shall blame him? 'I can't possibly write about that sort of thing,' he said to a friend.

There was, however, one striking exception to his lack of zeal for the exposition of detailed policy. This concerned defence. Virtually monthly, from 1957 onwards, he devoted his column to the potentially disastrous consequences of Duncan Sandys and his reliance on the nuclear deterrent. The hand of George Wigg lay heavy upon these pieces, though owing to Massingham's gifts as a writer the touch was not as ponderous as it might have been. Throughout Massingham's journalistic career, indeed, Wigg was one of his most valuable informants. One can only look back with something approaching awe to the number of rambling expositions, well-laced with sergeants' mess asperities and arcane military simile, which he must have endured over the years. As always with Wigg, however, there was gold in the dross, if one could but find it. Massingham, like other journalists, must have felt as if he were allowing a corporation dust cart to be emptied over his head in the hope, maybe vain, of discovering somewhere in the rubbish a diamond ring. It is strange, to say the least, that he finds no mention in Lord Wigg's autobiography.

Above all, however, Massingham was suffering increasingly bad health. In 1961 he left the *Observer* for the *Sunday Telegraph*, then something of a pioneering enterprise. His departure was lamented by many but went unrecorded, as far as I have been able to establish, by the *Observer* itself. When he gave up his column it was as if he had never been or disappeared or become a non-person.

But in 1962-4, while on the *Sunday Telegraph*, he had a wonderful revival, an Indian summer. The Vassall case made the ink flow once again. The Profumo affair was even more to his taste as material for column-writing. Until the succession of Harold Wilson, and some months beyond, he wrote articles on a fairly regular basis which were as amusing and perceptive as anything he had contributed to the *Observer*. The bravura characters, admittedly, were no longer about, though Massingham did his best with George Brown:

> There is no doubt whom the Tories would like. In fact some sharp-eared observers who have recently passed through Smith Square swear that they could hear Mr Iain Macleod and his attending angels deep in prayer and supplication in the chapel that is supposed to exist at the top of the Conservative Central Office. 'O, Lord,' they are reported as chanting, 'we don't ask for much. Just give us George Brown and we'll do the rest.'

Or again:

> As we know, Mr Brown is a mercurial person. He is now up and now down, now poor, earthy, humble George and now a mighty eagle, soaring through the heavens and lord of all he surveys. There is also a curious Walter Mitty side to his character. Sometimes he is Mr Florence Nightingale Brown, whose soothing touch has brought comfort to many a fevered brow. Sometimes he is that old salt Admiral of the Fleet Lord Brown of Trafalgar – no Vassall fan is he – whose rough countenance and even rougher ways conceal a most tender and constant heart. The only trouble is that one never knows what part Mr Brown is going to play next.

In their combination of wit, fantasy, disrespect and fundamental affection these passages are typical of Massingham. But before going on to give some examples of his earlier – and, in the opinion of some critics, though not myself, better – work, it may be as well to say something of his style considered technically. We have already seen a little of his character, appearance, background, habits and beliefs. All these avail nothing without technical proficiency, without craftsmanship. And Massingham was a superb craftsman. Some of his articles and columns are better than others. He had his ups and downs. So do we all. But he never turned out anything that was shoddy or ill-designed.

On the whole he did not take as his weekly subject a single topic or a solitary point of dispute between the parties. Nor did he 'angle' his articles in any surprising fashion. He would sometimes produce an apparent paradox, such as that the Labour Party (this in the early Sixties) was being transformed into the party of Empire, and that Mrs Barbara Castle might shortly be expected to join lustily in *Land of Hope and Glory*. Generally he would examine the political situation through a wide lens, looking at it from the point of view, in one week, of the Labour Party and, in the next, of the Conservatives. 'Let us, this quiet Sabbath morning,' he would begin, 'see what all the fuss is about, and try to put the matter into some kind of perspective.'

The advantage of this method is that one is most likely to give satisfaction to the maximum number of readers. People who are interested in politics will read an article on the general political situation, especially if it is amusing, well-informed and laced with character-sketches. They may pass by on the other side if a piece is on a subject in which they feel no interest, or which they consider unapt for the particular week. 'Why,' they may ask, 'is he writing about the Labour Party's boring policy statement when he should have been writing about the great spy row?'

Careful Informality

The disadvantage of the approach is that, though the writer is less likely to make mistakes, to get the timing wrong, a sharpness of focus is lost. Moreover, the method can over the years become monotonous not so much for the reader – readers, like editors, are natural conservatives, and prefer what is familiar – as for the writer. Though Massingham made occasional expeditions into the outfield for by-elections, he rarely varied his pace, length or direction. It was both a strength and a weakness.

He aimed at a careful informality, never pompous but never crude. He eschewed Latinisms, thereby losing in authority and power what he gained in familiarity and ease. He could write in short sentences without ever appearing abrupt. His metaphors and allusions were usually taken from the Bible, from hymns – the simpler the sentiments, the better he was pleased – and from popular sayings, proverbs, turns of phrase. He preferred 'although' to 'though', 'that' to 'which', 'as if' to 'as though'. He sometimes used the colon but almost never the semi-colon. His favourite form of punctuation, the comma and full stop apart, was the dash. He used this both to indicate parenthesis and at the end of a sentence where a comma or a colon might have served instead. His attitude towards language is nicely illustrated by his treatment of the Labour candidate at Hampstead in 1950:

> Mr Hawkins, the Labour candidate, is unlikely to quicken any pulse – poor, solemn, long-winded Mr Hawkins, who can never answer a question in six words when 1,600 will do almost as well, who never says but always states, who never needs but always requires. And Mr Hawkins, God bless and save us all, is a schoolmaster.

As a chronicler of the troubles of the 1950s he was unequalled, despite – maybe because of – his suspicion of revisionism. His message was usually that the party would somehow muddle through more or less intact. It is hard to choose an example of his work during these years because many of the controversies are forgotten today, and most of the points of detail were no more than that even when they were

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first raised. So I have chosen Massingham's observations on the resignation of Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman in 1951, partly because the similes he used about the Labour Party's disposition to quarrel were repeated many times in the following years, and became something of a Massingham trade-mark:

> The effect of all this should be to produce panic and bewilderment throughout the Labour movement, but people forget that the course of true love has never somehow run quite smoothly in the Labour Party. It resembles one of those apache dances where the man looks adoringly into the eyes of the beloved, only to throw her half way across the room. Listening to the fearful cries, noticing the damaged eyes, the vivid splashes of blood, the onlooker is apt to think that the lady would prefer to be at home, quietly knitting. But this is to misunderstand the real meaning of the scene. The lady is used to it. So is the Labour Party, in which the mating season is traditionally ushered in to the merry sound of broken glass.

I return to Massingham's influence. This really involves two separate though connected questions: the influence he exerted on his contemporaries and successors in the press; and the influence he, and others like him, exerted on politicians and the public. A preliminary point to note is that, though there is an abundance of political news and comment, the political column is not nearly so securely established as it is often supposed to be. Only the weeklies have a consistent record of giving work to columnists: the *Spectator* since 1955, when its political column was inaugurated by the late Charles Curran and established by Henry Fairlie; and the NEW STATESMAN since 1961, when the 'Spotlight on Politics' feature was begun by Anthony Howard.

Indeed if I were writing about the development of the political column rather than primarily about Hugh Massingham, Fairlie would occupy almost as much space. For what he did was to introduce into the political column, not so much facts, as ideas and a sense of history. He admired Massingham, he accepted the comic element in politics and he sometimes wrote in this vein himself, as amusingly as Massingham: but he also acknowleged that politicians were mainly serious and honourable people, engaged in work of the very highest importance.

Of course other columnists, notably Bernard Levin, have disputed this view both directly and by implication. If, they say, politicians are mainly serious and honourable – which they rather take leave to doubt, on the whole – it is no business of the columnist to inflate their pretentions still further by continually telling them so. The business of the columnist, they maintain, is to expose and deflate. So of course it is; and we should be careful before concluding that differences of general attitude necessarily govern every single article a columnist writes.

But all recent columnists, whatever their methods, and to whatever degree they may vary them, can plausibly be attacked on the same grounds. They sneer; are too literary; pretend to be above the battle; concentrate on the 'Westminster hot-house'; neglect the 'great issues' of peace and war; do not tell us about pollution, the population explosion, the energy crisis or whatever happens to be the latest fad; do not tell us about anything; tell us too much; trivialise; are irresponsible. Some of these criticisms are contradictory – for instance, that columnists go into both too much and too little detail. Some of them I accept with shame, others with exaltation. On the one hand, columnists undoubtedly ought to interest themselves more in foreign affairs. On the other, it is of the essence of the columnist's task to be irresponsible – or responsible only to his own conscience.

This brings us to the final question of influence. 'Whom,' people politely inquire, 'are you trying to influence?' The short answer is that you are not always, or even usually, trying to influence anybody at all. Why on earth should you? Why should political writing alone be assumed always to have some ulterior purpose? It is surely enough to try to tell the truth as you see it, and to persuade people to read it. From his experience of the 1930s and 1940s George Orwell concluded that for an overtly political writer this was an impossible attempt. Malcolm Muggeridge has recently echoed him. It was Massingham's supreme achievement to prove both Orwell and Muggeridge wrong. He wrote about politics, every week, for two decades, telling the truth as he saw it.

You haven't heard the last of Alan Watkins. You'll find him in The Observer every Sunday.

This Sunday, Alan Watkins starts a political diary of his own in The Observer. He will take you behind the scenes at Westminster and record the personalities and issues with his usual insight, sharpness and wit.

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THE OBSERVER

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London Diary

☐ I wish I felt as confident as Louis Heren succeeded in sounding on the radio the other morning that there are not, and never have been, British spies operating under cover of being British newspaper correspondents abroad. The allegation was made by Bernard Nossiter, London correspondent of the *Washington Post*, in the course of a lengthy article on Britain's Intelligence Services. The article originally appeared in the *Washington Post* three days before Christmas and it got its first mocking playback in the *Daily Mail* some time before the BBC brought a rather heavier treatment to bear. (Incidentally, as the BBC had waited so long, it might have been courteous if they had waited a little longer and allowed Mr Nossiter, now in Portugal, to reply to Mr Heren's criticisms.) For my part, I confess to having rubbed my eyes over one quote contained in the article – 'Fleet Street relies on the SIS secret vote to keep its correspondents in the field these days' – but then Mr Nossiter himself dismisses that as 'surely an exaggeration'. What I'm not so sure is an exaggeration is the suggestion that the Security Services have never been above 'planting' their own men on unsuspecting newspapers. How does Mr Heren think Kim Philby got *his* job on the *Observer* all those years ago in Beirut?

☐ If I were a doctor striving to sustain my independence and the fair name of my calling in these troubled times, I would not be baying so much for the blood of Barbara Castle as for that of the isolated creatures who run the British Medical Association. The BMA (which is inevitably but mistakenly regarded by the public as the true voice of British medicine) has done grave harm to the image of doctors by encouraging 'industrial action' within a profession which was previously supposed to put the welfare of the sick above all other considerations. Now the BMA council has called for action against all those consultants who tried to dissuade their juniors from striking during the recent troubles. The wretched medical politicians pretend to be outraged at such a misuse of the power of patronage. But consultants are supposed to teach their juniors how to become good doctors, and some consultants, thank God, still believe that good doctors don't make the sick and anxious suffer for their frustrations. If the BMA has reached the point of attempting to bully doctors into abandoning traditional standards of behaviour for selfish reasons, then it is time the profession disowned their miserable guild.

☐ I have always thought Colin Wheeler's witty cartoons – whether in the NS or elsewhere – have something very sad about them. His people look lonely; even desperate. Colin is also a painter and on Monday his first one-man exhibition opened at the Sutton Liberal Arts College, where he is showing drawings and paintings done in the last two years. He says there is no connection between the cartoons and the paintings, but there is a familiar sadness in his excellent still lifes and in several pictures of empty rooms with closed or half-closed doors. When he saw his work framed and hung his first thought was to call the whole thing off, and he still seems in two minds about it. 'I suppose if anyone else said they were no good I'd mind very much,' he said more cheerfully. He doesn't have to worry about that, because they are very good indeed. The exhibition continues until 30 January and all pictures are very reasonably priced.

☐ While national attention is concentrated on the 'trendies' of William Tyndale Junior School in Islington, the affair of the Newcastle comprehensive head who, in a belated contribution to International Women's Year, has announced the extension of corporal punishment to schoolgirls is a timely reminder that, in many other parts of the country, education is conducted on much the same principles as it was 50 years ago. Why do Tory MPs like Rhodes Boyson expect us to believe that the lack of old-fashioned discipline is the cause of modern adolescent misbehaviour? Much of the evidence seems to point the other way: schools in the North East have some of the worst disciplinary problems in the country, yet both strap and cane are still firmly rooted in the area. Glasgow schools have an annual vandalism bill of some £500,000; yet *their* teachers are hardly renowned for their kid-glove methods. The National Union of Teachers, of course, says that you mustn't tell teachers not to use their canes any more than you should tell surgeons not to use their scalpels. They've been trained and *they* know. Would the NUT please tell us which colleges of education include the application of corporal punishment in their curriculum?

☐ The brouhaha going on in *The Times* about the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service reminds me of an occasion some years ago. It was a Christmas-time lunch attended by, among others, a few senior civil servants and businessmen. In some context which I now forget, one of the businessmen said vehemently: 'The trouble is that the Foreign Office don't understand the problem and are absolutely wrong.' After a pause, one of the civil servants asked quietly: 'Can any of you quote any occasion this century when the Foreign Office has been right?' Silence ensued.

☐ There used to be an old-fashioned phrase 'to crown the edifice' – and that, or so it seems to me, is what Alan Watkins has managed to do in this issue with his farewell piece on Hugh Massingham (always, I've thought, his model and mentor) and 'The Political Columnist's Craft'. As vigilant readers of the advertisement on the previous page will already have gathered, Alan leaves us this week for the *Observer* – after more than eight years as the NS's political correspondent. Only four people have held the job since it was created 15 years ago; and the other two will not, I am sure begrudge my saying that Alan's achievement easily surpasses that of the rest of us put together. He must, I reckon, have written very nearly 400 'Spotlight' columns in all; and the BBC's *Weekly World* put it, I thought, very well when it said of him recently that he had 'elevated consistency into an art'. This week he hands over his blow-lamp, torch or whatever it is to James Fenton – who, as well as writing the 'Spotlight' feature, is also to be found (as a former winner of the Newdigate Prize at Oxford) contributing a poem to the back-half on p. 75. A poet among the politicians somehow seems nicely in the Massingham tradition.

☐ As both lots of television newsmen shrewdly foresaw, the spectacle of mink coats elbowing sable on the first day of Harrods' sale was irresistible; a fitting symbol for the start of a great inflationary year. There is something sweet about catching a look of naked greed on the faces of our supposed betters: on Saturday that was easy. It also made me think that we have now surely, and not before time, forfeited any right to sneer at the extravagances of Niemann Marcus or Hermes. If Harrods can take (as we're told) £2.5m. on the first day of the sale, that sum, including 45 grand pianos at the knockdown price of £2,750 each (£1,000 off), the art of parody is dead. (Imagine the man who went in for a pair of socks and came out with a bargain piano . . .) By Tuesday, things had simmered down and it was even possible to go on the escalators without thoughts of a disastrous accident involving all London's rich American population. A wild burst of vulgarity was over; normality was restored. In the meat department, upper servants conversed with Wodehousian gentility. 'And Madam's cold is better, I hope?' From mink, I suppose, back to gaberdine. (Which can be obtained for only £6.50 a yard, while stocks last.)

Crucifer

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Silly, but fun all the same – a pillow slip for couples who have a communication problem at bedtime: if it's a case of not-tonight-Josephine (or Joe) you put the No-side up. The flipside says Yes (natch). How worrying, though, if you bought one each and they never saw aye-to-aye! – *Good Housekeeping* (G. Buckman)

☐ Marriage scrutiny: Computer dating and marriage bureaux to come within the purview of the Office of Fair Trading in the new year. – *The Times* (D. R. Haggis)

☐ Another set of White parents, the report said, periodically called their Black foster child names such as 'black bastard' to get him used to name calling. – *Daily Telegraph* (L. J. Mason)

☐ Seventeen naked men frolicking in the street quickly got dressed when the police arrived . . . in the shape of Constable Elaine Diggins. 'I think my arrival wilted their egos,' she said. The men, who stripped off during a birthday party in Reading, were let off with a warning. – *Daily Mirror* (M. Boom)

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Caroline Seebohm

Laughter in New York

This is the month my New York City bonds would have matured. O tempora! O moratorium! All is not lost though, I am assured. According to the city's financial advisers, if I exchange my poor old bonds for shiny new MAC bonds, what amounts to my life savings will still return (in ten long years) to their fond owner, unharmed. ('MAC' stands for the Municipal Assistance Corporation, affectionately known as Big Mac after the indigenous giant hamburger of the same name.) Friends, however, tell me to hang on to my bonds for dear life, as they are more legal than Big Macs will ever be. How one bond can be more legal than another may seem mysterious, but apparently it's to do with liens. My bonds have liens on property should bankruptcy again set in, whereas Big Mac bonds have no liens at all worth speaking of. It will not surprise you to learn, therefore, that I am wrapping my bonds in their tissue paper and putting them back in my drawer, while laughing up my sleeve at the poor suckers who rushed downtown, in slavish obedience to the city's spokesmen, and exchanged theirs for lien-less, less legal Big Macs.

What is it like to live in a bankrupt city? First, let me give you the larger picture, which you *feel* rather than see. More and more corporations are taking themselves out of New York, where taxes are accelerating faster than Ferraris, and moving into the cleaner, safer, cheaper suburbs. Office blocks are standing empty. New building is grinding to a halt. One of the last new skyscrapers is going up near my apartment on 56th Street, and the steelworkers on the site there have opined that this is their last New York job for the foreseeable future.

As corporations go, so go their executives. Upper-income families are fleeing their Fifth and Park Avenue duplexes for gothic cottages in New Jersey, where schools are better, gardening is easier, and being a blonde is more fun. And as executives go, so goes their money. Who is going to fill the Metropolitan Opera, the Museum of Modern Art, and the New York State Theatre this year? Would you drive in from New Jersey, paying £3 for the privilege of crossing the Lincoln Tunnel into the city (that's the toll, as of writing)?

The city's cultural life is wilting daily. Museums seem to be closed as often as they are open. You have to ring up before taking a public library book back, to see if the place will receive you. The Botanical Gardens in the Bronx are closing all weekdays starting this January. The City University of New York, whose policies embody two of the noblest examples of what one might call the huddled masses principle – guaranteed admission to any New York City resident who holds a high-school diploma, and free tuition for all full-time undergraduates – may lose both in the financial squeeze. And the poor people working *for* the city compare it to working in a morgue. 'Many previously healthy employees are now taking tranquillisers as an aid in surviving tension-filled days,' reports a gloomy agency man.

To give an example of how the city's sense of humour is not lost, however, let me describe an increase in city employment: jumped-up meter-men and maids, clothed in Day-Glo vests, have started appearing at busy road junctions in rush hours to 'direct' traffic – usually causing worse snarl-ups than could conceivably have occurred with regular lights. What is worse, whistles, apparently attached to their lips by suction like babies' teats, are provided to attract the attention of drivers; and since even Raquel Welch would have her work cut out under such circumstances, they blow these whistles in an unceasing, relentless, shrill blast, causing feelings of uncontrollable rage to rise in the breasts of passers-by, and providing a motive for murder for neighbouring apartment-dwellers.

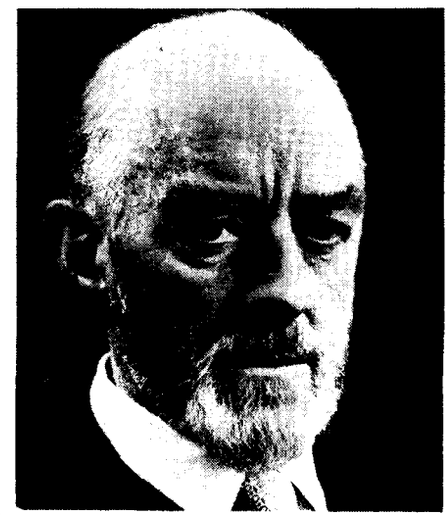
A more pleasant surprise for New York's walkers has been the crop of bus shelters that have suddenly sprouted at every bus-stop in Manhattan. They are made of glass, with a neon-lit advertisement at one end, presumably paying for the whole edifice. This is not, as you might imagine, the generous and imaginative spirit of Mayor Beame at work. Apparently they came about because a French entrepreneur, on a visit to New York, was waiting for a bus one day in a rainstorm, and said: 'Mon Dieu, wouldn't it be nice not to have to wait in the rain.' From such small beginnings do big ideas grow.

A further sign that private enterprise is not dead in New York is indicated by the rash of expensive new night clubs that have opened in recent months. The most astonishing of these is 'Doubles', a private, ultra-exclusive club with membership fees of $1,000 initiation and $200 a year, limited to 1,300 members with names that sound like cocktails – D'Uzes, Obolensky, Von Furstenberg, Ijams . . . The opening party, just before Christmas, was graced by Mrs Vere Harmsworth, of the *Daily Mail*, who declared:

> Everybody needs a club like this, because people need to be comfortable with people they know and like. When you're surrounded with bright and successful people, that makes for a good spirit. Besides, where else are you going to wear your pretty dresses, where are you going to feel elegant? . . . After a while, the discothèques feel tacky. Anybody can go there.

Imported British humour, it seems, is not restricted to Broadway. (I can't help mentioning one more example: authentic desks from Eton and Harrow, plus certificates of origin and history of the school, are being sold at Gimbels department store for $150,

Alec Guinness reads T. S. Eliot



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as 'offbeat decorative pieces' in the words of a store spokesman.)

One interesting repercussion of the city's plight is that suddenly the rest of the US is expressing sympathy instead of its customary hatred. New Yorkers are being called an endangered species; out-of-towners are asking where can they go to escape from Hicksville, Ind., if not to the Big Apple? People are being asked to 'Adopt a New Yorker'. And President Ford's scornful refusal to help the city (immortalised in the *Daily News* headline: FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD) has had an unexpected political effect. Before this moment, Ford had a 23-point lead over Reagan in a Gallup Poll of Republican voters. After it, New Yorkers were gratified to note Reagan had overtaken his rival by 8 points.

But all in all, bankruptcy is not an elevating experience. In a recent fire, killing several, at the Blue Angel Club (a transvestite joint which advertises itself as 'the only place in town where the eyelash in your soup belongs to the waiter'), some women died because they insisted on rushing back to the cloakroom to save their mink coats. Now, as good New Yorkers, we know we are not supposed to be thinking about our mink coats this year, but about Tea, Paul Revere and Unalienable Rights.

But just as soon as we virtuously turn our minds to the higher things of 1976, we learn that the city's Bicentennial Committee (set up by former Mayor Lindsay to formulate plans for commemorating the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution) will end up in the red by $137,549 at the end of July. Well, you have to laugh.

First Person

Arthur Marshall

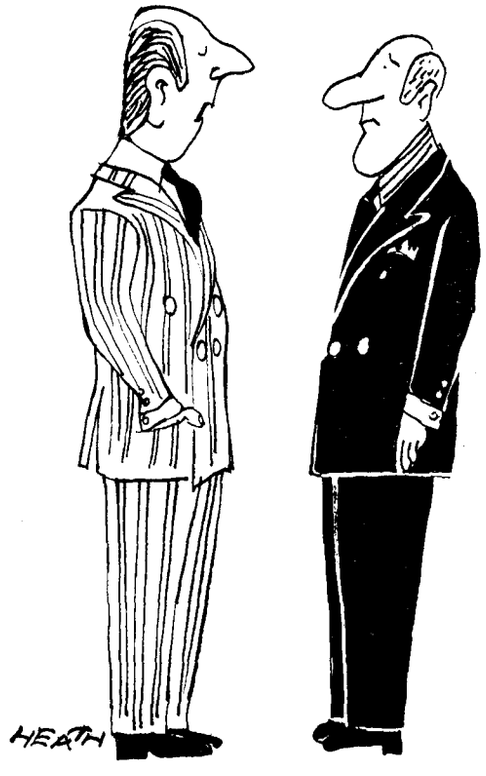
Je Proteste

'What kind of noise annoys an oyster most?' they used to ask in the nursery. The answer, if memory serves, was 'a noisy noise'. They can talk about low decibels and acceptable sound levels until they are blue in the face. I have now been three times on the receiving end of Concorde's quadruple exhausts, if that is what those bee-hive things call themselves, as it, thank God, flew away from me, and I have seldom heard anything so intolerable and totally vile. The blitz by comparison was a mere tinkling of afternoon tea-cups. It is just not right to suggest to the public that it makes the same sort of sound as a jumbo jet or a 707 or whatever. It does not. Try it and see. I entirely understand the point of those planning, though possibly for additional reasons, to ban it from New York and my heart goes out to the punch-drunk residents around Heathrow as they hunt about for larger and better ear-plugs, and the whisky bottle.

Married friends of mine, quietly gardening and minding their own business on a cloudy day in Somerset, heard it overhead and, not immediately identifying it, hurried indoors in alarm, certain that it was the ear-splitting rumble of the Final Summons and that they would shortly find themselves up aloft and answering a number of particularly awkward questions. Not a cowardy custard pair either. It certainly looks a dream of beauty, soaring and glittering needle-slim far up in the blue, but with nose down for landing or take-off it becomes a hideosity, a mean-looking eagle with warts under its wings. And the din! I would call this article *J'accuse* if I knew whom to *accuse*. So it must be *Je proteste*.

And, prestige and brilliant technology apart, all for what, may one ask? To enable high-powered businessmen, the only ones who can afford the trip, and doubtless at the shareholders' (yours and mine) expense, to arrive four hours earlier in Manhattan and, crazed with jet-lag, drink four more gin fizzes, make four more unfortunate decisions and ring up four extra call-girls ('Hullo, hullo, is that Miss Whackum?').

I once knew a slightly cracked mathematician whose theory it was that at cross-roads you should drive as fast as you could manage because, at infinity speed, you were never actually on the cross-roads and thus avoided unpleasantness with other vehicles. Experience proved the theory incorrect. Many of those who rule us are similarly cracked. Will nobody in authority come to their senses and realise that we have now, in all departments of transport, reached the apogee of speed necessity and acceptability? Nobody needs to get anywhere more quickly than at present and only fools want to. What is required is to get to places more cheaply. Yet, possibly fired by Concorde, one hears of British Rail's plans for a high-speed train (involving a hefty supplementary fare, no doubt, and losing yet more money) in which, I understand, we tilt alarmingly (well, it will alarm *me*) from side to side as it zooms round the banked bends, and only a limited view is to be permitted from its windows (tree-tops, clouds, birds if any) lest dizzy fits result from the sight of the track and the maniac manner in which we are progressing along it.



'Not only am I the first fare-paying passenger on Concorde – I am the only one.'

It is not that I automatically dislike all mechanical sounds. The isle is indeed full of noises and some of them rather agreeable. The whirr of the mower as Captain Anstruther readies the lawn for ding-dong struggles at croquet and clock-golf. The soft panting and chugging of tube trains halted in stations, a noise which I take to be the Westinghouse brakes restocking themselves for the next demanding calls on their person. The opulent, muted swoosh of a Rolls as it passes. The dear, defunct steam trains tearing north through the night. Paddle-steamers clattering over to the Isle of Wight. Combine harvesters at work in a golden cornfield on a sunny day. Even the hum of the modern dentist's new and unfrightening high-speed drill as, with the patient in the popular, spread-eagled relaxez-vous position, it gently splashes one's chin and provides at the same time soothing music that can transport one into the celestial regions.

However, coming back to earth, I don't intend to fly in Concorde (not a lot of elbow room, it's said, in that necessarily narrow fuselage) and so please don't send me tickets. It isn't even going to serve any of the places which I should find helpful (Budleigh Salterton, Amalfi, Moreton-in-Marsh, and Selfridges). But by other methods I'm going to continue to travel hopefully which, as we know, is a better thing than to arrive (Stevenson, of course).

Recently in London I was accompanied by two delightfully hopeful travellers of an unexpected kind. My tube train (chug, chug, as said) had halted at Gloucester Road's slightly raffish station and through the opened doors there waddled on board from the platform two rather elderly pigeons who, keen for a snack at any time, pecked about under the seats for tit-bits. The doors closed and we were all borne away to South Kensington. The doors opened. The pigeons looked up, decided to hang on for something classier, and pecked on. We reached Sloane Square, where I alighted, the pigeons emerging with me. They looked, as they peered uncertainly about them, nonplussed and ill at ease and one only hoped that in SW1 they weren't going to find themselves socially too far out of their depth. We must all, even nations, learn not to fly too high: or, come to that, too fast.

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Letters to the Editor

Wigg, Wilson and Peerages

Sir, I can say with truth that 'my attention has been drawn' to the article about 'Mr Wilson and Honours' in your issue of 2 January for I belong to the ever-growing legion of those who have ceased reading the NEW STATESMAN since you became its Editor.

Each and every one of Mr Alan Watkins's assertions in relation to Lords Brayley, Chalfont and myself is completely and utterly untrue. In no sense whatever do I bear or share responsibility for their elevation to the House of Lords, nor for their appointments as ministers. In the case of Lord Brayley I did not even know it would happen.

The truth is that the section of Mr Alan Watkins's article dealing with Lords Brayley, Chalfont and myself is a figment of the combined imagination of Mr Alan Watkins and yourself, and your readers should know that I told you this in categorical terms when you offensively made a similar suggestion at the BBC party on general election night.

The value of Mr Alan Watkins's research and reasoning as a political commentator can be measured by his assertion about Lord Brayley that 'his peerage was opposed by the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee and by Lord Shackleton, the then Labour leader of the Lords. Still, it was confirmed. Mr Wilson cannot bear opposition in matters of this nature.' The accuracy and objectivity of that statement may be judged by the fact that Lord Brayley was made a life peer in July 1973. So, the ultimate responsibility of rejecting the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee's recommendation would have rested, had it happened, not with Mr Wilson but with Mr Heath. For the record, your readers may wish to know that the present Prime Minister has commented to me on these allegations as follows:

> The article is offensive and inaccurate: the fact is that the recommendations that the peerages be conferred on Lords Chalfont and Brayley, and the subsequent recommendation in each case to the Queen that they be appointed to ministerial office, were mine alone – and in neither case were objections raised of the kind suggested in the article.

GEORGE WIGG

House of Lords

Devolution and the Labour Party

Sir, The letter last week from J. Emrys Jones, the organiser of the Labour Party in Wales, in no way contradicts the points that I made in my article on the subject 'Devolution and the Labour Party' (NS 19 December). In fact, it underlines them. For example, the Welsh Council of Labour Executive Committee called for an elected council as the top tier of local government. That is somewhat different to calling for an assembly which might well come into conflict with the Westminster Parliament and which could become the focal point of Welsh nationalism.

The evidence of the Labour Party in Wales to the Commission on the Constitution rightly said 'no man or nation is an economic island in the modern world'. It was further correct when it said 'to those in Wales and Scotland who call for separation, we say this: could a Welsh government operating solely on the basis of Welsh interests have brought the Mint to Llantrisant? . . . The policies we now pursue may not be perfect. Indeed, the Labour Party itself has been at pains to call for more ambitious plans to bring employment . . . we are totally opposed to the economic Balkanisation of the United Kingdom. The major problems of Wales may be more serious, but they are common to all the British people and they will only be solved by common purpose.'

The points I made continue to be valid. The national party conference since 1968 did not discuss or agree to the devolution policies. Because regional conference or the Scottish or Welsh conferences agreed to resolutions on various issues, that doesn't make it national policy for the party throughout the whole country. In fact, it is only in recent years that national policy has been allowed to be discussed at regional conferences, let alone accepted by the party as a whole.

With regard to the letter of Gordon McLennan, general secretary of the Communist Party, he, I fear, is mixing up national and class concepts. I would merely point out to him that on Merseyside, from where I come, unemployment is higher than anywhere else in the UK. The aspirations of the people there are to get full employment, to have decent houses to live in, to get a good education. These matters can only be solved by socialist policies, not by pandering to any misguided demands there might be for Merseyside separatism. I cannot understand from Mr McLennan's letter whether he seeks separation for Scotland and Wales or not. His letter is unclear despite the proposals he puts forward.

ERIC HEFFER

House of Commons

Students and the Broad Left

Sir, The takeover of the National Organisation of Labour Students by the 'Clause Four' grouping has led to speculation that Labour activists will now take more part in student affairs. Can I put in a plan for closer attention to the political company we keep – particularly the 'Broad Left' coalition of communists, non-aligned 'socialists' and Tribuneites (at present controlling NUS) within which some Labour Party members have hitherto chosen to work. But should we support a group which hinders rather than helps the Labour cause with students?

The Broad Left opposition to attempts to 'democratise' the NUS with an executive directly elected by all students is a case in point. With a vested interest in the present unrepresentative system which gives them 14 out of 16 executive places, they smear their opponents as 'Tories' – ignoring the fact that Labour students have campaigned actively for direct elections to lessen the alienation of many students from the NUS. As one Broad Left Activist said in Oxford recently: 'NUS is too important to have its executive elected by the mass of students.' Dare I suggest this elitist arrogance is hardly the platform to which Labour students should subscribe? Still, it fits in with past Broad Left support for the NUS's 'anti-free speech' policy and a slavish adherence to a 'Moscow' international line – silence over Czechoslovakia, the treatment of Soviet Jews and dissidents and recently over Mrs Gandhi's activities.

They are not only Stalinists but also appalling bureaucrats. Last summer I and other students were negotiating over college charges – but when we phoned the NUS for assistance all they offered was a nebulous 'autumn campaign'. Any coherent socialist case over education cuts is thrown away in a welter of verbiage from posturing Marxists perpetuating NUS hack careers on permanent sabbatical. The NUS has rejected the £6 pay policy – which, if applied to students for 1976/77, would give an agreeable grant increase of about £180 – not for some Tribuneite alternative but for an unprioritised 54-point composite.

Yet this is the group often equated with 'Labour' among students. I shudder to think of the adverse effects on Labour's university vote in Oxford's spring council elections after a year's incompetent administration from our Nixonesque Broad Left Student Union President. For Labour students to go along with seedy, ineffective Broad Left policies is playing straight into the hands of the Tories. The Broad Left rely for support on students who vote Labour nationally – yet few Broad Left activists are Labour Party members or work for us when their ego-tripping student politics days are over. Labour students must have self-confidence – break with the Broad Left and avoid being discredited with them. Otherwise the future *electoral* implications of progressive but as yet politically uncommitted students finding that the only constructive radical policies are those pursued by non-Labour groups in NUS are alarmingly obvious. Must we allow Charles Clarke's coterie to complete the disillusionment with Labour among students so ably begun during the Vietnam era?

GORDON MARSDEN
ex-Student Action Officer
Oxford University Labour Club
New College
Oxford

Oman and Counter-Insurgency

Sir, Fred Halliday (NS 2 January), discussing British army tactics in Oman, compares the counter-insurgency 'food-control' tactics now allegedly being used there with the British Boer War concentration camp policy.

He states '20,000 Boers died of starvation in concentration camps', and implies that food was deliberately withheld. Save as to the number of deaths, his statement and implication are incorrect, for there was enough food in the camps. Mortality was due mainly to epidemics (measles and dysentery) and to non-epidemic sickness, operating among groups of people without knowledge of camp hygiene, herded together in poor physical condition after being expelled from burnt-out farms and suffering from the hardships of travel (see Walker's *History of South Africa*).

The policy was evil enough, but was not one of starvation. Wrong about the Boer War, is Fred Halliday right about the war in Oman?

H. J. BARKER

23 Doveton Road
Johannesburg

The Outlook for New Zealand

Sir, David McGill's article, 'New Zealand Turns Right' (NS 5 December), gave a good indication of the shock felt by most liberal-minded people at the results of the elections, here on 29 November. However, now that the figures are out, rather different pictures emerge – in some ways milder and at least more explicable, in others even more shocking than the original.

In the first place, taken overall, this was not a National gain but a Labour defeat. David McGill didn't exaggerate the ballyhoo put up by the National Party, Muldoon in particular. All the worst fears and prejudices of New Zealanders were played upon to such an extent that even some National Party members tried to call a halt. They were shouted down by the PR boys on the grounds that this sort of blatancy would pass 'for them out there; they'll swallow it'. They did, but only to the extent of 2 per cent of the total voting public. In

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1975, National received 39 per cent of the total, as against their own 37 per cent and Labour's 43 per cent in 1972. Labour, however, dropped in 1975 to 33 per cent.

Where did all the votes go, this rather bleak summer? The answer to this is the shocking part, ominous indeed for the future. Out of under 2 million entitled to vote, 334,235 or nearly 18 per cent just didn't. You can explain this the way you want – disappointment, complacency, a plague on both your houses – but the real name for it is apathy. Whatever happens when that sort of apathy persists, we know from previous experience that democracy rarely survives.

A dictatorship of the Left? As McGill says, Muldoon's party hammered this one hard with cries of 'Pommie Commie' union-stirrers, though the more intelligent members must have known it was rubbish. I have been out here 46 years but it doesn't need personal experience, only superficial study of NZ social history over the past 100 years, to tell you that most immigrants from the industrial districts of Britain have been I'm-all-right-Jacks who, with their class certainties (lower-middle, as we know, can be a great deal more certain than the elitists in their crass opinions), would far rather see a Hitler in charge than the faintest whiff of communism.

The real reason for the defeat of the Labour Party appeared in an article in the NEW STATESMAN some time back, which prophesied that the financial institutions, the insurance companies plus overseas interests (big finance, call it BF for short) would conduct a massive campaign to down Mr Whitlam in Australia. The prophecy proved correct and it is exactly what happened here. Another three years of the superannuation fund and the Government would have ceased to be a beggar, internally at least.

The irony of this election lies in the fact that, ever since Norman Kirk died, the Labour party under Rowling (pleasant, middle-class, middle-of-the-road) has been moving steadily away from the Left, antagonising most of the thinking members of the community with its neglect of environmental policy, its bulldozing tactics of centralisation and, at the last, its incredibly stupid 'baby bonus' nonsense. Only the superannuation fund remains and Muldoon's first job will be to scrap it even if he has to break the law to do so.

I don't know about David McGill's 'fear and loathing' but however one looks at it the outlook is certainly depressing. Living here, it is difficult to credit the fact that there are still so many imbued with anachronistic, post-colonial attitudes backed up by thousands of the above-mentioned immigrants who have arrived since the last war; that so many could fall so easily for the vulgarities of the Muldoon campaign. But let's face it, those are the facts. The wife of a prominent author and radio personality, who has lived in Europe and America, said to me before the election: 'Perhaps they should have Muldoon for a while; then they'll see what Watergate means.' Yes, but I doubt it.

IAN HAMILTON

75 Ngataringa Road
Devonport, Auckland
New Zealand

A Woman's Lot

Sir, I am even older than your septuagarian correspondent Pauline Epstein (Letters, 9 January) and know only too well how women have had to fight against reactionaries of both sexes.

But does it not occur to her that crêches and nursery schools have to be staffed by 'female chattelist sows,' belonging, however, [illegible] and the state? I am sure that men would like to take a hand too at child care, were it no longer deemed unmanly. And we have won for women the choice *not* to have children.

To make Concorde, and/or pilot it or fly in it as air hostess, may be the be-all and end-all of our existence. But so far as we know, whatever happens in the future will be the work of human beings. It would seem sensible to treat them, when young, as our first priority.

DORA RUSSELL

Carn Voel
Porthcurno, nr Penzance

Sir, During the last 30 years I have been a nursery nurse, teacher, social-worker, domestic bursar, housekeeper, parlour-maid, chamber-maid, scullery-maid and waitress; laundress, charwoman and window-cleaner; seamstress and knitwear producer; chief cook, baker and confectioner, and jam maufacturer; gardener and greengrocer; lumberjack and log supplier; chauffer, car cleaner and general handyman (not, unfortunately, a mechanic) and sometimes decorator, joiner and electrician. An interesting and varied career. What am I? Apparently a female chattelist sow!

MARIAN E. DAVIES

Hob Cottage
Kerridge Road
Rainow, Macclesfield

New Towns

Sir, In my London Diary on 26 December I criticised *The Times* for failing to correct the impression they gave that Kirkby was a statutory New Town. At the time when I wrote, well in advance of publication because of Christmas printing arrangments, my point was valid. Before my article appeared, however, *The Times*, somewhat belatedly, had remedied their omission. I still cannot understand why *The Times* did not publish the letter from the New Towns Association as soon as it was received. A correction, to be effective, ought to be prompt.

PAUL JOHNSON

WC1

An Evening with Mr Powell

Sir, I wonder what Corinna Adam (NS 9 January) means when she talks about the '*British passport holders from East Africa*'. Such euphemisms do not help the cause of race relations, either, and are as poisonous as Mr Powell's game of numbers. Are the whites, born and brought up in East Africa, *British passport holders* as well?

CHHOTU KARADIA

Pear Tree Cottage
Gwaelod-y-Garth
Cardiff

Roll's Record

Sir, My acquaintance with Sir Eric Roll spans his earliest wartime service in Washington. I believe him the most diligent, intelligent and generally effective official concerned with economic matters that I ever encountered in any government. I agree with the NEW STATESMAN (19 December) that the decision to keep in being and subsidise the redundant capacity of Chrysler – a weak and indifferently managed company in the United States as well as in Britain – was wrong. But surely the blame belongs to the Government and not to a former civil servant, long retired, whose subsequent position with Warburg's and hence with their clients has been in no wise concealed.

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

Harvard University
Cambridge
Massachusetts

Q. E. D.

Sir, 'The simple truth,' writes Mr Victor Jones in your correspondence columns of 2 January, 'is that socialism is the imposition of sanity on the berserk, of the rational on chaos, of thought on impulse, of social concern on industrial greed.'

That explains why in socialist countries political dissidents are confined in lunatic asylums. Anyone who opposes the government is *ipso facto* insane.

MICHAEL HOWARD

All Souls College
Oxford

Bluecoat Boys

Sir, I am prepared to believe that one of Ian Trethowan's happy memories of his school-days (NS 2 January) was the musical tradition of Christ's Hospital. However the contribution to musical tradition by Constant Lambert and Colin Davis is significant; that of Bernard Levin is not, I submit, of any worthwhile note.

J. G. STEEL

20 Burwood Close
Guildford, Surrey

Arthur's Seat

Sir, I, too, enjoy Arthur Marshall's column very much indeed and have no doubt that it is in many ways more suitable for your older readers than mine was. But I was stunned by the fact that you chose to print Eric Hiscock's spiteful valedictory mumble: 'The delightful difference between your late contributor, Auberon Waugh, and his replacement, Arthur Marshall, is that the latter *knows*' – and I feel I should be allowed to point out to the many overseas NEW STATESMAN readers who have inquired that I continue to write a weekly column in the *Spectator*.

I spotted two errors in Arthur's delightful second piece about dukes but am loth to point them out, knowing only too well the pressure under which we weekly columnists work.

AUBERON WAUGH

The Spectator
56 Doughty Street
London WC1

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BOOKS & ARTS

Alan Ryan

Report from the Brink

The Making of a Saint: The Tragi-Comedy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau by J. H. HUIZINGA *Hamish Hamilton* £7.95

The Making of a Saint is not a well constructed book; indeed, it lacks almost every virtue a book ought to possess – other than the all-important one of being about someone whose life and ideas are of engrossing interest. Mr Huizinga's book is unfocused, disorganised, clumsily written and crudely argued. As a work of biography, it is almost impossible to follow, since he eschews the usual conventions of chronological sequence and darts hither and thither, pursued by the panting reader. It hardly even pretends to be a serious study of Rousseau's ideas. Mr Huizinga works from two assumptions, the first that Rousseau's serious political writings such as the *Social Contract* were hardly read, had no influence and therefore don't matter, the second that no one as wild and incoherent as Rousseau *could* produce anything ordered enough to be a serious contribution to politics, education, history, or aesthetics. Rousseau's contradictions are the signs of a disordered psyche and intellect. The burden of Huizinga's case is that Rousseau was an immature hysteric, unable to control either his ideas or his emotions. It is to establishing this depressing proposition that most of the book is devoted; its ammunition is drawn very largely from Rousseau's own *Confessions* and his *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques*; but the corollary is that Rousseau's non-autobiographical writings also ought to be read merely as symptoms of inner disturbance. It is no use trying to take them on their merits, for they have none.

A standing difficulty in reading Rousseau is, of course, that he can adopt not merely different but often strenuously opposed views, even within the same work. Is *Julie* about the need to manipulate people in their own interests or a passionate warning against doing so? Both morals can plausibly be drawn from the novel. Are the 'people' of the *Social Contract* the plain men of France, or the citizens of Utopia? Both conclusions might be defended. But there are ways of dealing with Rousseau's contradictoriness, other than by treating him as an incoherent madman. Even if the search for an underlying unity fails, we might think it possible to find good reasons, rather than discreditable ones, which led Rousseau to take up views which he more than anyone knew to be opposed to one another.

The Making of a Saint sets out to discredit Rousseau-worship. But the title contains an obscurity which the book never quite resolves – is it Rousseau's making of himself into a saint, or his friends' willingness to think him a saint (until their eyes were opened) or the gullibility of later historians which is being attacked? One might think that Mr Huizinga's description of the 'Age of Enlightenment' as the 'Age of Gush' did enough to explain why Rousseau's contemporaries sometimes (and only sometimes) treated him as a candidate for canonisation; the more interesting question would be that of why historians succumbed to the same vices as over-emotional, under-employed, upper-class ladies, but that is a question which Huizinga hardly raises.

This makes it the more surprising that Huizinga has thought it worthwhile to produce the monstrous catalogue of Rousseau's personal defects which makes up so much of *The Making of a Saint*. Who, nowadays, is devoted to Rousseau in such a fashion that this rather repetitive tirade is needed to restore him to wisdom? I thought it was universally accepted that anyone who could make David Hume as angry as Rousseau eventually did must have been personally quite intolerable. Nor have I ever imagined that the reader of the *Confessions* or *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques* could have wanted to make a friend of their author, who emerges as a fascinating case, perhaps, but hardly as a fellow human being. Still, those who need persuading ought to be persuaded that Rousseau was no saint, in any plausible sense of the term. He was suspicious, grasping, sordid in his sexual tastes, ungrateful and boorish towards those who had befriended him, cowardly in his reaction to political and religious oppression, and unspeakably callous in his treatment of Thérèse Levasseur, whose five children he put into the Foundling Hospital. In passing Madame de Staël is quite rightly rapped over the knuckles for blaming on Thérèse the sins which were entirely Jean-Jacques' own. But a proper response to this demonstration is: so what? The story of Rousseau's friendships and their eventual collapse is familiar enough; what does it all show, over and above the fact that one would have been unwise to make friends with Rousseau if one valued one's reputation with posterity? In particular, what does it show about how we should now read what Rousseau wrote? Does Huizinga discredit Rousseau's ideas when he discredits Rousseau as a lover and a father?

A question always worth asking is whether we ought to care if the author of a given piece of work turned out to be a computer, a mere machine – *how* does the author's character bear on the character of his writings? We do mind an adulterer writing an article professing to demonstrate the wickedness of adultery; we don't mind an adulterer writing an article professing to demonstrate the inadequacy of Newtonian mechanics. It does, similarly, seem to matter that in the *Discourse on Inequality* Rousseau lists as one of the horrors of civilised life the fact that fashionable women so frequently resort to abortions to defeat the purposes of Nature, while he sent his illegitimate children to a Foundling Hospital which killed two thirds of its inmates in their first year. As Gibbon said, the Foundling Hospital was the form of infanticide acceptable to the Roman Catholic conscience. The justification for our disquiet is obvious enough; implicit in a work of social theory such as the *Discourse* there are moral injunctions, or at least the premises of moral arguments which tend to issue in such injunctions. The writer who lives by principles he disapproves is either suffering from dissociation of the personality or isn't being honest with us. Hence, Huizinga concludes quite reasonably that if there is independent evidence that Rousseau was either psychologically disorganised or else morally unserious, we can dismiss the books along with their author.

But this is certainly too hasty a conclusion. Huizinga takes the lowest possible view of Rousseau's motives, and whenever we find Rousseau apparently contradicting himself, we are asked to believe that he must be up to some characteristically dirty trick – perhaps stating some extreme view loudly to attract attention to himself, and then toning it down to conciliate authority, or to make himself acceptable to some well-off benefactor. But this doesn't do justice to Rousseau; it makes him altogether too scheming a villain, when Huizinga himself points out that he was usually as much of a menace to himself as to others. Low cunning won't explain his actions.

For it is arguable that the 'feebleness' of character, which Rousseau emphasises as much as Huizinga does, really does have a certain exemplary quality: that Rousseau's life and writings are of a piece, and in a fairly easily described way. Rousseau was an acute critic of his times; and Huizinga seems to me to be quite wrong in thinking that Rousseau's ambivalent suggestions about *remedies* betray a deep uncertainty about his *diagnosis* of the sickness of the modern world. The acuteness of Rousseau's criticism was partly the result of the way he felt the sickness he diagnosed within his own personality; he felt that he could not simultaneously be himself and yet fulfil all the expectations other men held of him; he felt that there was no authentic expression of his own individual character available to him and recognisable by others; and he thought that this gap between the mask and the self, or this tension between calculating head and impulsive heart, was the result of what he loosely called 'civilisation' – the process of becoming self-conscious, cooperative, rational human beings instead of mere beasts. From this much else follows – and especially the ambivalences follow: ought we to avoid this tension by leaving human society, or by making men completely dependent on society? Are the savages to be envied, or are they too deficient in what is most typically human? Is history the record of an unmitigated disaster, or has there been

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a sort of progress, in which gains have always been offset by losses, but not entirely cancelled out by them?

That Rousseau should still find readers and defenders is not surprising; for, as Huizinga admits, Rousseau does sound strikingly like a citizen of the 20th century – the anxieties about authenticity are those depicted in Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity*, the vision of the bloodthirsty ambitions of competitive man, which ends the *Discourse on Inequality*, might have come out of Freud's *Civilisation and Its Discontents*. It is *our* cultural and psychological anxieties which Rousseau depicts so persuasively. A person who suffered *all* of them would be far madder than Rousseau, and quite unable to write about them. Rousseau, intolerable as he was, ought to get more credit than he does here for the quality of his reports on what life is like so near the brink.

Michael Baxandall

Marketeers

Art on the Edge by HAROLD ROSENBERG
Secker & Warburg £6.00

By 'art' Harold Rosenberg effectively means the kinds of thing shown in New York art galleries, not 'art' as in Plato and Schiller, or as in Arts Council, or as in skill – though now and then something of all these is borrowed too. The 'edge' is not quite the edge of a cliff but a sort of delimiting boundary for artistic painting and sculpture, 'the edge that separates them from the crafts, commercial design, and the mass media'. It is an explicit anxiety in this new collection of articles that art is being jostled across this line.

Who are pushing it? Particularly the dealers, the collectors, the museums and, in a seedy accessory role, the art historians. The dealers reduce art to a commodity, the material product of artistic activity, objects detached from intentions and ideas, susceptible to merchandising. The collectors buy these dislocated objects at the inflated prices brought about by the dealers' merchandising techniques and thereafter have a strong interest in price support. The museums, whose trustees are collectors, are one agent in this support, inducting us all into the cult of the object, its shimmering money value and treasure-like glamour; the showmanship involved in competing for audiences and patrons is as much responsible for this as the kind of direct promotion of its trustees' interests associated with the Museum of Modern Art. The art historians are panders to this establishment, both putting the stamp of value on almost any old rubbish – Rosenberg instances the recent exhumation, cataloguing, historical placing and high-pressure selling of 19th-century American landscape painting: we can all think of equivalents here – and implicitly justifying the 'hyperanimation' of the art business, the emphasis on this year's model, with the vaguely evolutionary and vanguardist pattern of their historical exposition.

All this puts the contemporary artist in an impossible position. In the first half of this century the modern movement sought to illuminate and enlarge human thinking and feeling by developing new styles in art: it was ideas that gave rise to manners. But the dealers sell and the historians expound the manners alone, in the negotiable form of objects detached from the ideas that produced them; the artist is reduced to a repertory of formal mannerisms. Much of the odder product of the moment may be interpreted as a protest against this. Conceptualism explicitly throws out the contaminated object in order to assert the primary idea. Minimalism, by contrast, caricatures the new status of the object. Warhol jibes at the establishment by selling his signature on any object, even a silk-screening of the Mona Lisa – a parody of the art historian and his attributions. Photorealism is little more than a variant on this, with the ancient and vulgar appeal of illusion as an incidental bonus.

Rosenberg's analysis, naturally less simplistic and more sensitive in its detail than this summary allows, is not particularly new; it is a de-Marxified version of a widespread belief. Yet what sort of status can such an explanation have? Has 'the market' – Rosenberg's term for the nexus, and fair enough – created, or is it merely exploiting and so incidentally reinforcing, the cult of the object and our other bad habits? Is the market itself a primary or merely an effective cause, just the instrument of something more elusive in our culture that makes us like objects and novelties so much? Does the market take the form it does – in its own terms, by the way, quite an elegant form – because it is a projection of some larger economic disposition? If so, in just what respects? The questions are antique but inevitable if one is not retreating into one of the ready-made determinisms, and Rosenberg is too experienced to do that.

Of course the dealing-collecting-exhibiting-connoisseuring system is becoming more and more unwholesome; it is difficult not to feel some of the people at present playing it are being wilfully squalid. But the voguish revulsion against the fact of market, as opposed to our particular market, seems to miss the point. The public of a complex society, not tribal and not improbably collectivist, has no alternative to a market of some kind: it is the only tolerably elastic means of communication with its artists. However obliquely or unconsciously or perversely or even inversely, most of the superior artists one can think of have been distinguished precisely by their capacity to respond within their own talent to the stimulation of a market: there really are no autistic masterpieces.

But the New York of Rosenberg's commentary is a single interlocking system in which the relationships of Alfred Barr Jr., the Sidney Janis Gallery, the Trustees of the Metropolitan and of the Museum of Art, Warhol, Duane Hanson and the rest can be directly plotted. And its reach goes far beyond New York: we are all one market now. This means not just that we and the artists are denied alternative ambiences but that the field is not laid out for normal cross-pollination. Varieties do not interact so much as succeed each other in a frantic and commercially manipulable way.

Where our system most differs from more successful ones is in its lack of any real plurality of markets. Thus Cubism – to take the epic phase of the modern movement that for Harold Rosenberg reaches a classic moment in Abstract Expressionism – came out of a manifold market: official Salons, unofficial black Salons of both neo-Impressionist and Fauve colours, occasional group exhibitions, independent dealers of various complexions. Picasso and Braque opted for fairly exclusive attachment to the dealer Kahnweiler, a spoiled metal-broker and clearly a well-intentioned man, and addressed themselves to a small specialised public of mainly foreign, moderately moneyed people of consciously progressive taste. The idiosyncrasy and complexity of Picasso and Braque, their use of primitivist conceits and modest subject-matter, their inventive outpacing and effective aloofness from the Cubist rump that was making a group noise in the black Salons they themselves kept out of, all went well with their attachment to this market. They chose a market and were stimulated by it, a mercantile elective affinity.

What has happened since is that overblown successors of Kahnweiler and his model Vollard, monopolising avant-gardisme with the same technique of guarantee and exclusive contract, have taken the whole field over. The Salons, white and black, are dead; group exhibitions have degenerated into a dealer's device; an alarmingly large number of the most talented artists are the opulent pensioners of an alarmingly small number of international dealers. We, the public, recoil from the louche fact of Market into vulgar Marxism of the self-exculpatory kind. And all the time, potentially, markets are nice, markets are clean; more, smaller and better markets are what we need.

It seems a pity the emphasis of Harold Rosenberg's collection is so much on the cash-nexus theme, where he has not much new to say. All but one of the articles are short pieces from the *New Yorker* between 1971 and 1975 and the best bits are brief reviews of artists he very much likes – Miró, Barnett Newman, Giacometti in particular. Though the form does not let him develop anything at much length, the whole makes up a quinquennial report from New York, and at its best it is better critical journalism than any being published in this country.

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Keith Thomas

Old Eve

Medieval Women by EILEEN POWER edited by M. M. Postan *Cambridge* £4.40 and £1.90

Eileen Power died prematurely in 1940. A learned scholar with a profound knowledge of medieval economic life, she was also one of the most delightful writers of her time. Lucid, witty and marvellously equable in tone, she managed to be humane and sympathetic without teetering into sentimentality; never strident or acrimonious, her writing still retained a sharp, intellectual edge. Few books can have done more than her *Medieval People* to give the ordinary reader a vivid sense of the medieval past.

Today, when enthusiasm for studying the history of women threatens to outrun scholarship, it seems all the sadder that she never lived to complete the history of medieval women which she had so long projected. She gave definitive treatment to one small part of the story in her *Medieval English Nunneries* (1922) and the essay on 'The Position of Women' which she contributed to *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* (1926) is still the best brief sketch of the whole subject. But most of her notes and drafts remain unpublished; her widower, Professor Postan, now tells us that they will eventually be completed by the American medievalist, Eleanor Searle. Meanwhile he has put together five of her short essays, originally given as talks and popular lectures. They make a slim, but elegant book, prettily produced with attractive illustrations from medieval sources scattered through the text, instead of being huddled together in the middle, as is the practice of so many publishers today. It is a pity that there are so many minor errors and misprints, particularly in the notes and bibliography.

Agreeably written, but formidably incisive, these brief essays go to the heart of the subject, while remaining readily accessible to the lay reader; they could easily have appeared as articles in the *Listener* in the days when the BBC had more time for serious talk. Essentially they are an elaboration of her chapter in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages*; indeed they incorporate whole paragraphs from it. Their main theme is the way in which official teaching on the inferiority of women was constantly mitigated by the practical realities of daily life. This was not just because some women were too strong-minded to be kept down, though, as Eileen Power remarks, in the *fabliaux* 'the henpecked husband is a suspiciously favourite theme'; the man whose ideal was Patient Griselda frequently found himself married to the Wife of Bath. The more fundamental point is that in the Middle Ages women played a central economic role. From the great lady down to the peasant's wife, the married woman was responsible for managing a

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household which had to be far more self-sufficient in food, drink and clothes than would be conceivable in anything but the most way-out commune today. On top of these extensive domestic duties, wives frequently took part in their husbands' work. The magnate's lady supervised his estate and business affairs when he was away at court or the wars; only in theory did the romantic lady of chivalry spend her time flirting, embroidering and playing endless games of chess; in practice she was a tough and hard-working executive. The craftsman's wife also helped her husband or practised a trade of her own. Women participated in virtually every form of industrial activity, though they tended to be discriminated against by the gilds. On the land they performed most kinds of agricultural work. On most manors a sizeable proportion of the tenants were women.

Of course it was as widows that women really came into their own, farming their late husband's land or carrying on his business in their own name. But even within marriage there was often a rough and ready equality. In the towns, indeed, it was common to allow married women the independent legal status necessary for them to trade on their own account in complete independence of their husbands.

It is no wonder that the suffragettes developed a theory of lost rights, looking back to the Middle Ages as a time when women had enjoyed a genuine independence, denied to their Victorian successors. In her *British Freewomen* (1894) Charlotte Carmichael Stopes demonstrated that as late as the 17th century it was possible for at least some women to vote or return Members of Parliament. For her the Middle Ages was the time when aristocratic women could, by virtue of land or inheritance, hold the great offices of High Sheriff, Marshal of England, High Steward, even Royal Champion. Similarly, Lina Eckenstein in her *Woman under Monasticism* (1896) expressed the wistfulness of the feminists struggling for entrance to the professions when she declared that

> the career open to the inmates of convents both in England and on the Continent was greater than any other ever thrown open to women in the course of modern European history.

There is none of this nostalgia about Eileen Power's picture of the Middle Ages. She shows that the English nunneries had only 1,500 occupants by the time of the Dissolution and that if they offered an honourable career it was only to the daughters of the upper classes. She also shows how the medieval Church and aristocracy together generated a formidable repertoire of misogynist dogma, made none the more attractive for being mixed up with chivalry and Mariolatry. 'Preachers told them in one breath that woman was the gate of hell and that Mary was Queen of heaven.' There was no middle position for women in medieval theory: they oscillated between the pit and the pedestal.

The most enduring legacy of the Middle Ages was the common law doctrine of the legal subjection of the married woman. Tolerable so long as husband and wife were a single economic unit, these laws of marriage and property became unacceptable when the Industrial Revolution created a large class of independent female wage-earners. The exclusion of women from public life correspondingly became more irksome in the 19th century, when the factory took production out of the household. Wives no longer participated in their husbands' business, while the goods they had once had to make at home could now be bought in the shops. For middle-class girls the household ceased to be a place of active employment; their boredom and frustration created a demand for access to the universities and professions. In these changed circumstances the pressure to jettison the legal inheritance from the medieval past became overwhelming. But in their time the formal disabilities of medieval women had been compatible with a good deal of practical equality and mutual self-respect.

Peter Conrad

Action Replay

Sublime and Grotesque: A Study of French Romantic Drama by W. D. HOWARTH
Harrap £12.75

Confrontation between tragedy and comedy is the most telling agent of literary change. In Shakespeare the rival forms dispute possession of every play – the comedies are tragic for those left out of the copulative symmetry; the tragedies are divine comedy for those, like Cleopatra, who can luxuriate in dying; political history is tragic, as the Lancastrian princes discover, but social history, as Falstaff proclaims, is irresponsible and resurgently comic. In the 17th century the Shakespearean truce between tragedy and comedy breaks down: becoming mutually subversive, they meet in the middle to produce satire. When Shakespeare is resurrected by romanticism, the same instability recurs: tragedy and comedy turn quizzically into one another, but this time they unite to produce not satire but irony, self-interrogating and vacillating between the sublimity of mental aspiration and the grotesquerie of physical confinement.

Romanticism internalised Shakespeare. Tragedy and comedy do not encounter coincidentally, as Hamlet meets the gravedigger; they are simultaneous aspects of the ironic mind. This reconstitution of Shakespeare is the subject of Mr Howarth's book, which is, despite its anxious plot-synopsising and its theoretical timidity, a notable addition to literary history. Its title derives from Hugo's preface to *Cromwell*, which describes the evangelical progress of literature from the Biblical ode through Homeric epic to Shakespearean drama, from gods to heroes to men, from patriarchy and theocracy to a Christian realism which joins the sublime and the grotesque, ministering both to the tragic mind and the comic body. The abrupt collisions of Shakespeare's double plots become for the romantics an image of metaphysical duality and psychological division. In Hugo's drama the double plot is a condition not of action but of character, in creatures who are twisted compounds of angel and gargoyle – the hunchbacked jester Triboulet (Verdi's Rigoletto) whose paternal love sanctifies physical deformity; Lucrèce Borgia, whose maternal care purifies moral deformity. Hugo's is a Gothic opposition of extremes: he mixes metaphors as recklessly as he does moral qualities; like cathedrals, his plays are expositions of the past they contain, as in *Ruy Blas* the three heroes personify three anterior states of dramatic art here confused – Don Salluste represents drama, whose expression is vigorous action; Don César is comedy, whose mode is uncomfortable imbroglio; Ruy Blas is tragedy, wisely submitting to fate.

Upsetting the legalistic notion as a moral substance which is determined and consistent, Hugo made it elemental, obedient to the whims of natural process. The frenzied rhetoric of his characters sounds frigid now, but their violent heteroclite natures are developed into a new kind of ambiguous individuality by his successors – in Musset's Lorenzo, at once virtuous idealist and depraved as Mr Howarth says, or the Kean of Dumas, whose romantic quarrel with society becomes, as adapted by Sartre, an existential protest against his own nauseous and inauthentic lack of identity.

The volatile and self-preoccupied romantic character embarrasses the dramatist by refusing to submit to the dictates of a plot. Like Hamlet, he longs for the privacy and listlessness of the dramatic monologue, and Hugo obliges him: plot is reduced to 'a framework for a series of solos and duets, arias and recitatives' for which 'the dramatic context is often only a pretext'. This dissolution of drama leads towards the novel, where action need not be dramatically compressed and exigent, and can wait on the character's leisurely and vagrant progress towards self-discovery. But more than this, romantic drama aspires to the condition of opera, as Mr Howarth suggests: the plays of Hugo, Dumas, Musset and Scribe enjoy a battered immortality in the operas of

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Among this week's contributors:

MICHAEL BAXANDALL is Reader in History of the Classical Tradition at the Warburg Institute and author of *Giotto and the Orators* (1971) and *Painting and Experience in 15th Century Italy* (1972).

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PETER CONRAD is the author of *The Victorian Treasure House* and is currently working on a study of Wagner.

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Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi. Opera solves the problem of the romantic character's contempt for action by converting action into performance and absolving its characters from the need to do anything but sing; opera has, too, something of the metaphysical contradictoriness Hugo called Gothic – the voice is produced in the body but released from it as an exhalation of spirit. Hence the Marguerite of Dumas's *La Dame aux camélias* is more moving as Verdi's Violetta in *La traviata* because music is her way of redeeming her carnal faults. Much is forgiven Dumas's heroine because she has loved generously; all is forgiven Verdi's heroine because she has sung beautifully. Similarly, Donizetti's Lucrezia is more troubling than Hugo's Lucrèce because she murders seraphically in music.

Opera is drama's enemy because it does not believe in the reality of circumstance or conflict, and it can appropriate danger, death or insanity as occasions for song. Madness frees Donizetti's Lucia from the prosaic constraints of reason and allows her, trilling in competition with the flute, to indulge in a kind of musical free associationism. This school of drama subsides into ballet as well as opera: not only does it make the wandering mind a musical instrument, it transforms gesture into an art of acrobatic virtuosity, reducing the text to mere choreography – the most celebrated case is the tumble of Marie Dorval devised for herself at the end of Vigny's *Chatterton*, collapsing at the top of the staircase, sliding down with back to the banister and declining into a tableau at the bottom.

In Shakespeare tragedy and comedy preserve a wondering distance: the clowns marvel at the zest for self-destruction of the tragic heroes, who in their turn almost envy the craven safety of the clowns. Romanticism turns the opposites into one another. Tragedy and comedy, sublimity and grotesquerie are overlapping aspects of the same mind, and their ironic union produces a spiritual hybrid like Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac – a knight of faith with an elephantine nose.

James Fenton

In a Notebook

There was a river overhung with trees
With wooden houses built along its shallows
From which the morning sun drew up a haze
And the gyrations of the early swallows
Paid no attention to the gentle breeze
Which spoke discreetly from the weeping willows.
There was a jetty by the forest clearing
Where a small boat was tugging at its mooring.

And night still lingered underneath the eaves.
In the dark houseboats families were stirring
And Chinese soup was cooked on charcoal stoves.
Then one by one there came into the clearing
Mothers and daughters bowed beneath their sheaves.
The silent children gathered round me staring
And the shy soldiers setting out for battle
Asked for a cigarette and laughed a little.

From low canoes old men laid out their nets
While on the bank young boys with lines were fishing.
The wicker traps were drawn up by their floats.
The girls stood waist-deep in the river washing
Or tossed the day's rice on enamel plates
And I sat drinking bitter coffee wishing
The tide would turn, to bring me to my senses
After the pleasant war and the evasive answers.

There was a river overhung with trees.
The girls stood waist-deep in the river washing,
And night still lingered underneath the eaves
While on the bank young boys with lines were fishing.
Mothers and daughters bowed beneath their sheaves
While I sat drinking bitter coffee wishing –
And the tide turned and brought me to my senses.
The pleasant war brought the unpleasant answers:

The villages are burnt, the cities void;
The morning light has left the river view;
The distant followers have been dismayed;
And I'm afraid, reading this passage now
That everything I knew has been destroyed
By those whom I admired but never knew;
The laughing soldiers fought to their defeat
And I'm afraid most of my friends

Mervyn Jones

Man of Ross

A Presumption of Innocence by LUDOVIC KENNEDY *Gollancz* £3.75

In 1969 a man named Patrick Meehan was convicted of a crime – burglary with assault, amounting to murder because one of the victims died – which he did not commit. This in itself isn't the big surprise (read on). Ludovic Kennedy begins his book by telling us that when he was a boy, and a devoted reader of murder trial reports, he believed that the convicted were always guilty. 'It never occurred to me that judges could be biased, that policemen could plant evidence, that innocent men could be kept locked up for years.' He must have been a rather credulous boy, far more credulous than me or than most boys, including virtually all working-class boys. I can't remember an age when it wasn't clear to me that a conviction is the sign of a successful trial, bringing promotion to detectives, kudos to lawyers and satisfaction to judges. A defendant who proves his innocence – which nobody, in the real world, presumes – upsets the whole production.

As he awaited trial, Meehan had plenty to worry about. He was a life-long criminal (a safe-blower) and this in fact was why he first came under suspicion, when the police required the known villains of the Glasgow area to account for their movements on the night of the crime. The two guilty men had driven from Glasgow to Ayr, where it was committed, and Meehan with another criminal called Griffiths had also driven past Ayr to Stranraer. The aim of this trip was nefarious – to reconnoitre for a possible safe-blowing job – and was naturally not disclosed in Meehan's first statement.

The surviving victim, Abraham Ross, didn't see his assailants clearly but he did hear them address one another as Pat and Jim, the names of Meehan and Griffiths. And Griffiths, when the hunt was on, went on the rampage with a shotgun and was shot dead by armed police. He was on the run for other crimes, but he seemed to be behaving like a murderer with nothing to lose. True, Griffiths had a Lancashire accent and Ross was sure that the guilty men were both Scots; but once Griffiths was dead the only testimony about his accent came from people like his girl-friend. Meehan was Scots all right.

Despite all this, the case against Meehan was relatively thin as such things go, and it was clinched by police actions after his arrest. One was an identification parade of glaring irregularity – but the facts have been elucidated only since the trial. The other was the production of scraps of paper taken from Griffiths's overcoat pocket, tallying with paper said to have been lining the shelves in Ross's robbed safe (Ross said he didn't think there was any paper, but the police said there was when they inspected

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summing-up got confused, to put it charitably, about the time that Meehan and Griffiths would have had at their disposal to drive from Stranraer and commit the crime. Add, finally, that Scots juries can convict by a bare majority and this one (with 15 members) reached its verdict by 9 to 6. So off Meehan went to begin his term of life imprisonment.

But he knew who the guilty men were. One was a man called Ian Waddell, who was in the same jail awaiting trial for another offence and admitting to the murder in exercise-yard chat; the other man's name can't be published but it is known to Meehan and to Mr Kennedy. At the trial, therefore, Meehan's counsel used the rare device of a Defence by Incrimination, naming Waddell as the murderer and putting him in the witness-box. Waddell of course used his right not to incriminate himself and met the crucial questions with: 'I refuse to answer.' The judge directed the jury that the defence by incrimination had not been established.

However, when Waddell did answer questions he was patently lying, so he was later charged with perjury. He pleaded guilty and got a three-year sentence. After serving it, he made a full confession to the crime, first in interviews with various journalists and then in a statement published by the *Scottish Daily News*. He included details about the house that only Ross could have confirmed, and Ross did. The truth about the affair is now absolutely certain – even more certain than the truth about Evans and Christie – and it is set out by Mr Kennedy with clarity and confidence.

Meehan, meanwhile, had refused as a protest to go on prison working parties. The Governor, convinced of his innocence, declined to inflict harsh punishments but put him in solitary confinement. He has been in solitary (with one short break) for five years. For, despite Waddell's confession, Meehan is still in prison and Waddell is a free man. The authorities have refused even to set up an inquiry – it would cover the identification parade and the business of the scraps of paper, no doubt. If Meehan's conviction ought to astonish only credulous boys, his continued imprisonment should jolt even cynics.

One speaks of 'the authorities', but there's always one man on whose desk the buck stops. This is Mr William Ross, Secretary of State for Scotland. To my mind, Mr Ross ought first to explain his conduct (he has never tried), secondly to resign and get out of public life, and thirdly to sit in a small room by himself for a few weeks and see how he likes it.

I am myself no great buff on cases like this, and I find it natural to get more excited when people who are of high value to humanity and can be unreservedly admired – which one could hardly say of Meehan – are guiltlessly imprisoned in South Africa, the Soviet Union, Chile and now India. But injustice is always injustice; to care about Bukovsky and Mandela and not to care about this Glasgow safe-blower is to be moved to selective sympathy rather than aroused about injustice itself. To get Meehan out of jail would be one setback for the enemy. I hope this book does it.

Valentine Cunningham

Pool Ring

Families and Survivors by ALICE ADAMS *Constable* £2.95
Bracknell's Law by WALLACE HILDICK *Hamish Hamilton* £3.50
Super Tour by MARILYN ALLEN *Souvenir Press* £3.50

Families and Survivors bears a grander title than its little brood of over-affectionately regarded people, pursuing a niminy-piminy trek from 1941 to 1971, with here a two-year hop, there a three-year skip, gets anywhere near deserving. Things – if that nomination doesn't stake too forward a claim for the very little that's actually to be caught going on – begin around a Virginian swimming-pool with the 14-year olds, Louisa and Kate, discussing sex-appeal: and the novel merely drifts and swirls about these two and their expanding round of friends, lovers and husbands, eventually to circle back on itself and return to this self-same pool, just as the relationships circle back and Louisa ends up with John, the childhood chum who turned down Kate when she wanted to 'go too far' to the sounds of 'Moonlight Serenade'.

At first the novel isn't all that bad. In the presence of the precocious adolescents, with their dinky-adult parrotings, and in the telling of Louisa's waspish ruckuses with the Wasserman family, over their blintzes and their hostility to Eliot ('An anti-Semite and a great poet is a contradiction in terms') interest is even quite stirred. But come the Fifties, the rotting of Louisa's marriage to Michael Wasserman, and the decisive statement that 'to love Michael is to hate oneself', what interest there has been pithers away into a desultory peering into the marital kaleidoscope. Louisa's affairs, Louisa's divorce, Sally Chapin's divorce from Andrew to marry Alex Magowan, Andrew's affair with Jill and marrying Isabel, queer Martin Wasserman (now Walters) and his marriage to Grace Magowan, and then the children: thankfully the novel leaves the gaggles of kids spawned in all this messiness to an unspoken future. But little wonder loony Allison Magowan is confused in her Institution:

> A list of people are coming to see her this afternoon. Her father, called Father, and Alex, who is her mother's former husband. Her mother speaks sadly of 'Alex'. And Mrs Chapin and Sally and her father's wife, Mrs Alexander Magowan.

How many does that make, she wonders? Her friend, fat Mary, knows: only 'Two. Three at most.' 'There seems to be a lot of marrying going on,' opines Alice, correctly, reflecting that 'there are too many names'. She's right again. The novel's actors are reduced to just names in a mere catalogue of marital follies and sexual trying, sympathetic enough in outline, but demanding more fleshing out to glean sympathy in a fiction.

Much more artful than Alice Adams, Wallace Hildick raises the English killer-thriller to a new power, and it seems to me no accident at all that in *Bracknell's Law* one keeps hearing the cool narrative tones of Cecil Day Lewis's powerful crime-writing doppelganger Nicholas Blake. The novel's form is attention-grabbingly unusual. The journal of Pat Bracknell, a chatty, not too polished English housewife in America, tells how she discovered her husband Ron's notebook tucked away in a padlocked tool-box in the basement, and transcribes what's in it. In his old school science notebook, after the reports of chemi-lab stuff, Ron enters his latest experimentations: his killings. He's dispatched one Otis P. Newstrander with barbiturate-laced whisky, he's immolated – by niftily introducing a can of petrol through the window – a half-dozen Hell's Angels in a caravan they were duffing up, and he's plugged a pimp supplying him with a naval revolver. The twin accounts, His and Hers, chart the Bracknells' rise in American small-town society, his social attraction fuelled by post-murder adrenalin. Irony is nicely deployed. There are plenty of hawks to applaud the deaths of Angels that the newspapers gloat on, even if the most hawkish neighbour, crewcut, soldierly Gene Piscola, is a known wearer of his wife's undies.

Wallace Hildick always manages his grim material with an engaging wit: like having Ron sing 'People Who Need People' as he prepares his leather abdomen-protector before going out to stalk a mugger. In fact the only part a bit awkwardly contrived is Pat's wifely disbelief – surely Ron's imagined it all, inventing back from news paper reports? – and her relief at discovering that Ron has borrowed her girdle only to hold his tummy-shield *in situ*: thank goodness he's 'not *really* kinky'. Even the ending – and these diarised fictions are always hard to close – doesn't disperse into the too disbelievable. Pat collapses under the strain, and Ron's notebook records her hospitalisation and his anxious consultation with her medic over the journal he's discovered and can't read (it's in shorthand – a nice touch reserved for the finale). The kindly doctor arranges to have it collected and deciphered, and Ron's caring reflection peter out as he records 'what sounds like a near-collision' outside: screeching brakes slamming doors, 'purposeful footsteps'. And that 'purposeful' – just too heavy a hint for what's already sufficiently signalled – is the only foot put really wrong in the whole book: some achievement.

Marilyn Allen, one is unsurprised to learn, is the pseudonym of a woman executive in a travel agency, a former model who has 'travelled thousands of miles'. Authorial thanks are offered to helpful travel agencies, especially Alvin Klingerman Inc. Klingerman Inc. gets into this bloated story of a very exotic world tour for the very rich. So does a former model anxious to keep up her looks. So do piously wise reflections about travel agents (always curiously, known as 'agents'). Every place visited by the wealthy drove of honeymooners, playboys, retiring school-marms and drug peddlers gets logged travelogue-wise. And not even the repeated bouts of rough-house sex manage to save this glorified travel-brochure for fiction.

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Art

Robert Melville

Gold Provoketh

Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria *British Museum*
The Golden Age of Spanish Painting *Royal Academy*

The Thracians seem to have had no written language, but Herodotus gave an account of them in the 5th book of his History, about 200 years after the Greeks had colonised some coastal regions for the purpose of trading with them. They were a tribal people and when they were not fighting invaders they were fighting among themselves. The rich finds in the area of Thrace which is now Bulgaria come almost entirely from the burial mounds of tribal leaders. They practised polygamy and the wives did the work. When a man died his favourite wife was killed to keep him company, and his best pair of horses was led into the tomb to enable him to enter the next world at a gallop. They had another barbarous custom when they wanted to send a message to the other world. They chose a messenger, threw him into the air and caught him on their spears; if he died it meant that the message would be delivered, but if he survived he was considered to be evil, and another messenger had to be sent.

The objects in the exhibition at the British Museum include jewelry, talismans, votive tablets, horse trappings, food bowls, wine vessels and armour. A great number of them are made of gold or silver, often highly decorated. But there were so many invasions, migrations and outside influences that there is no settled style that can confidently be called Thracian.

Neanderthal objects found on sites close to one another show striking stylistic differences. The figures catalogued as idols have flat fronts and protruding buttocks or big round bellies, stumpy legs and long, ribbon-like arms. Even the silhouettes cut out of a flat bone or a slither of marble are in quite different conventions.

If the objects are correctly dated, the Thracians appear to have been developing an independent style in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, based on the Scythian animal style. But the Scythian gold plaques from South Russia disclose an obsession with animal combats which is not shared by the Thracians. They were more concerned with the human hunter. A man on a horse, attacking or attacked by a wild animal, appears on many of their plaques during this period. They are not as refined as the Scythian work, but a particularly interesting example is the gilded silver plaque of an armoured horseman spearing a bear. He is riding a stallion which is stamping on a wolf. The armour on the man's leg is decorated at the knee with a woman's head. An actual greave of this kind is one of the most impressive exhibits. The head on the knee-piece is silver but the ears, eyebrows and outlines of the eyes are in gold. One side of her face is ornamented by parallel stripes of gold thought to represent tattooing. (The Greeks said that the tribal aristocracy went in for tattooing and that it clearly separated them from the peasantry.) Under two plaits of her hair which end as snarling lions, snakes with lions' heads emerge from two decorated cup-like forms on either side of her chest; these are identified in the catalogue as snails' shells, but perhaps also serve as breasts.

A plaque belonging to the same period shows a man and woman in sexual intercourse, and it's the only sign of intimacy between the sexes in the entire exhibition. The man is seated and the woman is kneeling. They are fully clothed but have lifted the fronts of their garments. They are called 'deities', possibly to excuse their behaviour, yet the rather complicated hair style of the man is so carefully registered that it was probably in fashion at the time.

But the Greek trading posts had already become towns and Greek influence was steadily ousting the Scythian. The richest find of all, the Panagyurishté treasure, is loaded with Hellenistic figuration. The group at the BM adds up to a great weight of gold, and consists of an amphora with centaur handles, three wine jugs in the form of women's heads, four drinking horns shaped like the heads of various animals, and a large disc with a central knob or omphalos surrounded by one band of acorns and three bands of negro heads which were individually formed and soldered to the disc with silver. I have the impression that the whole lot was commissioned from Greek craftsmen by a wealthy Thracian who dictated the subject-matter. I may be wrong but I can't think of a better explanation for the crowded ornamentation, unimaginative virtuosity and tasteless splendour.

A helmet-mask made of silver, bronze and iron is the only rival to the greave with a woman's head; they both give out power and menace from lost but entirely different worlds. The helmet-mask was made in the 1st century AD, at least four centuries later than the greave. Thrace had become a Roman province, and many Thracians had been taken into slavery. Spartacus was one of them, and it's possible that some of the revolutionaries who founded the People's Republic of Bulgaria inherited the courage and resourcefulness of the band of Thracian slaves who, under his leadership, successfully opposed the military might of Rome for a couple of years. The mask has the veristic look of Roman portraiture and may be a likeness of the original wearer. It tells us more about the conqueror than the conquered, and if it became the property of a Thracian collaborator I think it must have been sold to him by a Roman soldier who was short of cash. One supposes that the new owner wore it in much the same spirit as African chiefs sported top hats in the old colonial days.

An exhibition devoted entirely to masterpieces by El Greco, Velasquez and Zurbarán might live up to the grand title given to the present show at the Academy, but I didn't expect to see many examples of their work in an exhibition of paintings by 38 Spanish painters of the 16th and 17th centuries, so I was not disappointed, only surprised and rather horrified. We are not likely ever to see a blacker collection of pictures, both literally and symbolically, than this presentation of Spain's 'golden age' of painting.

I've never before seen so much black paint in an exhibition, and it's only very rarely a nice, soft black like Ad Reinhardt's; it's hard, shiny, insensitive stuff. There's yard upon yard of it in Ribera's vast *Calvary*, and it's the background of most of the life-size portraits and the still lifes and the religious paintings that aren't views of Heaven. It puts the Academy into mourning. Even El Greco's huge *Annunciation* and the Velasquez standing portrait of Olivares contribute symbolically to the blackness of the show. Olivares looks as horribly and stupidly arrogant as the Kaiser, and in the Greco *Annunciation* the clash between iconographical and painterly excesses has freakish results. The hordes of babies' heads pouring out of Heaven, looking like strings of onions, carry the implication that God is going to give the Virgin a big dose of hormones. It's noticeable that in the other Annunciations, by lesser painters, the Virgin is always going up to Heaven. It seems to have been a Spanish custom to confuse the Annunciation with the Assumption.

A few works are superb. El Greco's long-faced St Luke, treated as the patron saint of painters, holding a brush and a holy book which he has opened to show us, with melancholy pride, his little painting of the Virgin and Child, is a deeply touching masterpiece. The Velasquez portrait of Philip IV is a marvellously warm study of a 'tired, troubled and saddened' monarch, and incidentally proves beyond question that our National Gallery's version has been over-cleaned. Zurbarán's painting of four empty domestic vessels, spaced out in a straight line across the canvas against a plain, blackish background – a metal cup and three ceramic pots whose double handles remind one of women with arms akimbo – is the most mysterious and in a sense the most religious painting in a show stiff with piety and courtly gloom. The painting is almost literally a miracle, an act of transubstantiation which turns the kitchen ware into sacred objects.

There is, however, one delightfully lighthearted picture, a dazzling costume piece by Carraño de Miranda which has a beautiful, sprightly young woman inside it. The style of the costume reminds one instantly of the little Infanta in *Las Meninas*. It has a fantastically wide skirt with a flat top like a portable counter. It would be very useful at a buffet luncheon, but carefree young Inés de Zúñiga keeps her pistol on it!

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Films

David Wilson

Gag Bag

The Sunshine Boys *ABC, Shaftesbury Ave.*
Great Expectations *Odeon, Marble Arch*
The 8-Wheel Beast *Warner West End 3*

Misanthropy is Neil Simon's stock-in-trade. His characters, usually Jewish and always suffering, hate even their friends as much as they despise humanity at large. No-hopers in a world without pity, they survive on scorn. The shrewd formula of Mr Simon's comedies is that his people articulate the frustrations which leave the rest of us lost for words. 'Lousy Japs,' splutters Walter Matthau at a TV set on the blink, 'they lost the war, so they send us their junk.' None better than Matthau at dispensing this kind of bile – acid wouldn't burn in his mouth – and there's a line a minute like it in *The Sunshine Boys*, the best Simon comedy to be done over for the screen since *The Odd Couple*.

The idea here is custom-built for one-liners. Matthau is an old vaudeville star, 57 years in the business and resenting the retirement of his straight man (George Burns) which broke up the act. He lives, with his dusty mementoes and his weekly *Variety*, in a New York hotel, from which he makes querulous sorties to a sandwich saloon where there's a double-decker named after him ('That's a real star') or to audition, disastrously, for TV commercials – he gets his lines right but he can't remember the name of the product. Rescue is promised by his harassed agent, also his nephew (Richard Benjamin, a self-effacing stooge to Matthau's manic turns): television is making a history of show business, and there is a spot for the Sunshine Boys. The trouble with this notion is that for all their mutual professional respect, off-stage Matthau and Burns loathe each other. The comeback is a catastrophe, and with the intervention of a heart attack the two vaudevillians are on their way to swap venom in the Actors' Home. 'The first booking you got me in ten years,' Matthau growls at his nephew through the sick-bed flowers.

This last contrivance creaks a bit, though it is the logical curtain to what is more or less a two-hander. Life, for these old incompatibles, is just the old routine: the gags are the same but for real. Matthau, finely attuned to the make-up and mannerisms of an irascible veteran, gets most of the laughs, and not just because of his inimitable way with a poisonous line: watch his expression, mouth leering from ear to ear, as he dunks a used tea-bag into his partner's cup. Herbert Ross, who directs, rightly keeps him centre-stage. But George Burns, slow-burning an insult with immaculate timing, is never upstaged. Only an old pro could play one as well.

Those with fond memories of the David Lean *Great Expectations*, whose graveyard opening must have been the traumatic front stalls experience of a generation, should not besmirch them with the new version, directed by Joseph Hardy. The opening here, with studio fogs and plywood tombstones, is as scary as a clockwork mouse. This all-star edition, courtesy of Lew Grade, was shot for television (by Freddie Young, who can do better) and originally took the floor as a musical. It shows: choppy cutting, with characters poised on wings of song which never fly, and a tinsel and treacle score by Maurice Jarre.

The sets, too, look surplus *Oliver!* – Victorian Christmas cards with orchestrated extras doing their carolling and carousing bit, Miss Havisham's establishment is all cobwebs and candlesticks, and you *do* notice the tame mice on her wedding cake: the formidable lady herself is played, with some style in the circumstances, by Margaret Leighton. Pip is Michael York, coping passably but ill-matched by Sarah Miles, who renders Estella as a neurotic with burgeoning sexual frustrations. The rest pass through, though Anthony Quayle does register a nuance or two as Jaggers.

The 8-Wheel Beast is an Italian juggernaut. Sandro and Nino are a pair of truck drivers – a tough northerner and a hot Sicilian – with ambitions. On the road, through Germany and Poland mostly, they do what long-distance truck drivers are supposed to do: eat, drive sturdily, lay the ladies, fend off the Mafia, deliver the goods. This odd couple also scab during a strike, though the comrades, being good Italians, turn up to rescue them when the going gets rough. One scene, with the lorry straddling a long drop, is a nail-biter. The rest is different, as road movies go, but indifferent.

Television

Eric Korn

Cellmates

Far and away the most exciting thing on television this week was the Horizon programme on symbiosis, *Intimate Strangers* (BBC-2; written and produced by Robin Bates and Vivienne King). The warm-up act was a spectacular freak; a South American passion flower which bribes a corps of ant mercenaries with nectar to keep caterpillars away from its flowers (they flourish instead on remote tendrils, a botanical DMZ); then the classic case of *Convoluta*, a flatworm that has abandoned the normal animal habit of eating for a kind of internal grazing, feeding off the produce of a garden of seaweed cells that it nurtures, tenderly carrying them in to the sunlight and away from other would-be herbivores.

But these are freaks; and from them the programme leaped into the soaring, mind-wrenching speculation – it's been around theoretical biologists for some years but they've kept it to themselves – that some of the internal 'organelles' found in every liv ing cell above the bacterial level are actuall captured and internalised colleagues: tha the most intimate partnership of divers forms is a prime tool of evolutionary build ing. Thus mitochondria, which carry ou crucial energy transfers, may have origin ated as free-living bacteria whose allianc with other cells was a response to the firs great evolutionary crisis, when the exhaus fumes of the first plant-like cells filled th atmosphere with poisonous oxygen. There' a possible 'missing link': the giant amoeb *Pelomyxa* which lacks mitochondria, but in corporates working bacteria round it nucleus. (The creature is found, like a num ber of other exotic small animals, in stag nant water round zoological museums; it been rediscovered after being AWOL fo years, in a scummy pond round whic generations of heedless zoologists used t drink coffee.) We saw another protozoan swimming by frenetic vibrations of its ampl moustachios, like a tiny Arnold Bennett (t whom, incidentally, we owe the usefu neologism 'a clayhanger' for a sluggish clif hanger): these bristly appendages, which ar found everywhere, for example in th human nose, bronchi, and uterus, and mod fied as the rods and cones of the retina, a sperm tails and as part of the chromosom apparatus of every cell, may have begun a free-living spirochaetes. Which puts pox a wholly new light.

One flagellate turns out to be not a animal but a troika of protozoan, spirochae and bacterium. Another twist of complexity it lives inside the gut of a termite, itself colonial form; without it the host could no digest wood – no higher animal eats gras it merely supervises a microbial factory.

If all this is true, it will shatter th popular image of germs (a genocidal stere type), rearrange ideas of the origin an evolution of life, weakening still further th notion of a universal exterminating con petition, and make us feel very different about individuality. We are accustomed think of the body as a commonwealth cooperating, sometimes unruly, cells: no each cell becomes a mutual-aid commun Did the script writers realise how muc solid ground they had eroded?

It made the improbable circus of Dr L (*World About Us*, BBC-2) seem positive workaday; this engaging Taiwanese fanat is trying, apparently, to catch eve bizarrerie of insect form or behaviour one epic film. He has some diverti monsters and skilful mimics: I dreamed a symbiosis between stick and leaf insec to produce a six-legged bush that dissipat into a stridulating cloud if attacked. T commentary stressed his marmore patience, as though none of this had ev been done before; and clarity wasn't help by his accent: 'this insect produce a par stimulating substance that corgies gauz Other devoted Taiwanese are croppi butterflies by the million, pulling them ap and jointing them with wire, to decora wrists or lampshades; don't let me cat any of you lot – none of whom wou dream of wearing an osprey-feather boa sporting these murderous trophies.

Disappearing World (Granada) is alwa beautiful to watch, usually clear, often mo

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ing. Last week the Reth-elect (or perhaps Rev or Ref) of the Shilluk chose, in a fit of modernism, to have Sudanese fuzz instead of local chiefs in his ceremonial bodyguard. There were flurries of ill-tempered muddle and recrimination; where the rites do not flourish the people will not know how to stand. This week, with the Eskimo, there was a shock of recognition: they wear anoraks too. They are dispirited and resentful, remembering the days when people were fat, sod-houses cold and healthy.

Double Agent; *A Conversation with Graham Greene* (Thames) covered much the same ground as *A Sort of Life*: Greene chooses to present himself as subject to various kinds of malign inspiration, modestly understating the importance of his paramount craftsmanship. In the rather mechanical presentation of his trio *Chagrin in Three Parts* (Thames), Genevieve Page was an enchantress, fanged and predatory as Dracula. The author's kinsman was story consultant: as one might say, 'Hugh Greene was my valet.'

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Make-Believe

The Browning Version and **Carol's Christmas** *King's Head*
The Hot L Baltimore *Tower, Canonbury*
The Everest Hotel *Bush*

Terence Rattigan's *Browning Version* isn't the sort of offering one expects at the King's Head, especially at a time when the London fringe might be better described as the receding hairline of the British theatre, and something as alluring as E. A. Whitehead's *Old Flames* has yet to find a metropolitan slot. But there it is, a quaint and touching accompaniment to the smoked mackerel and roast chicken currently on the place's menu: Mr Chips with everything. Nigel Stock, dumpily blinking from behind his specs, plays the dry-stick schoolmaster who is not, so we discover, quite as dead as he seems; and Barbara Jefford is his unloving and unloved wife. Both seemed to me slightly miscast – he too soft and affable ever to be mistaken for 'The Himmler of the Lower Fifth', she not petty enough for the small-campus shrew, snob and vamp she's supposed to be. But together they successfully lure us into a nether world of surnames, timetables, sweet sherry, drab wallpaper, ill-pressed trousers, schoolmasterly facetiousness and wifely gossip; and it is a pity that Stewart Trotter's production, though strong enough on late-Forties atmosphere, is so inconsistent over more substantial matters.

There are some surprisingly cumbersome supporting performances, an accusation which can't be levelled at Frank Marcus's *Carol's Christmas*, which has no supporting performances at all. This is an amusing two-hander, over within the half-hour, about a slow-witted prostitute and an intruder who may be Santa Claus and may be just another client: both (as they agree, too explicitly for my taste) in the business of bringing make-believe to children of various ages. The face behind the whiskers belongs, once again, to Nigel Stock, and the girl in the black knickers is Prunella Gee, a twosome that left me nostalgic for a Marcus too long absent from our stages and frustrated by so brief a glimpse of him. To be sure, his voice here may at times strike a cynical ear as a bit whimsical and dewy; but be patient, wait for the ending, and you'll find that there are still teeth in the Marcus mouth. He is the same dramatist who wrote so cuttingly about the exploitation of women in *The Formation Dancers*, *Sister George* and *Notes on a Love Affair*.

Lanford Wilson's *Hot L Baltimore* won golden opinions, and even the odd silver trophy, when it appeared off-Broadway three years ago; and yet it has taken a group of amateurs to bring the bruited phenomenon to Britain. Here it is, not at the King's Head or Open Space, but in the pocket-handkerchief auditorium of the Tower, a reproach to our tardy professionals – or so it would be nice to conclude. Unfortunately, the New York opening seems to have been one of those occasions when Clive Barnes's purple prose got the better of the pink stuff between his ears. The effect, surely, is of Tennessee Williams without the moral core: human driftwood vaguely swirling in the River of Life, or, to put it more concretely, a floating population of tarts, oldsters, ecology freaks, social rejects and general nobodies meandering meaninglessly in and out of the lobby of a condemned hotel, all to melancholy hoots from the railroad outside. *Hot L*, I should explain, only means that the neon lights over the entrance aren't working properly. Brian Rix played the same trick some years ago: the Hotel Bedford became Hot Bed for the duration of what I remember as an altogether gutsier, more pungent evening.

Some superior amateur acting – Gwen Grounds, Valerie Testa, Joanna Hole, *et al.* – still failed to persuade me that this wasn't soggy stuff at heart. It is full of nice lines and affectionately observed cameos, but they never add up to that defence of frailty, that appeal for compassion, that defiant assertion of *humani nil a me alienum puto*, which marks Tennessee Williams even at his worst and wooziest. If you want a livelier evening, try the whirligig sci-fi concocted by our local Wilson, Snoo. *The Everest Hotel* presents us with three girls who may be residents of an approved school in Liverpool, may be nuns in a radio station perched among the Himalayas, and just may be the one imagining to be the other. The Virgin Mary is often invoked; so is the Portuguese revolution and so are the violent homes from which the protagonists come. The effect is of Michael Moorcock with a social conscience: a hectic verbal spree in which the most attentive listener should not be surprised (or worried) if he begins to lose his mental bearings. I enjoyed it, and so, one felt, did Janet Chappell, Anna Mottram and Emma Williams, all of whom inject plenty of voltage into their collective fantasies.

Music

Bayan Northcott

Full of Noises

British Music Now edited by LEWIS FOREMAN *Elek* £6.50
The Fires of London QEH

Sooner or later someone was bound to attempt a Good Composer Guide to our twangling isles. Even restricting his coverage to British nationals born since 1923, Lewis Foreman has had to include almost 100 composers in his new survey. Few perhaps are as prolific as Stephen Gersh (a new name to me) who has, it seems, produced over 300 keyboard passacaglias in his first 28 years. Yet the sheer quantity, not to mention stylistic confusion, of our new music over the last two decades has long needed a responsible sorting out. Alas, *British Music Now* largely sidesteps the question of why it has all happened and what individual, social or indeed national needs – if any – it fulfils. What we get are a sound bibliography and discography (the editor is a chartered librarian) and a ready-reference guide to some 70 composers which would have been more useful had works been dated and proofs better corrected.

But most disappointing are the often perfunctory longer studies from various hands of a questionable selection of main figures; aesthetic or technical themes would have covered the ground better. Maxwell Davies, Harrison Birtwistle, Gordon Crosse and Roger Smalley, for instance, have all deployed medieval techniques, as has Dominic Muldowney – though the latter's 'arrival' this winter already post-dates the book. Muldowney's *Solo/ensemble*, commissioned and first performed by Maxwell Davies's Fires of London last Friday, is a motet-like sequence of edgy, fugitive heterophonies, strung together on a curious continuo of muffled jazz percussion – played with deadpan wit by that engaging performer, Gary Kettel. Admiring this young composer's accuracy of ear, I was nonetheless left wondering what potential such elegantly finished music contains for future development.

This was never the case with even the most dourly schematic of Maxwell Davies's own early motet structures. As often before, *Ave Maris Stella* for six players starts with tentative introverted counterpoint upon a plainsong-derived cantus. But Davies's more recently found talent for urgent gesture and florid figuration is soon driving this material through a sequence of immense crescendi – one of them a transcendental cadenza for marimba – to create a tension that is only finally resolved in an elegy at about the slowest tempo he has ever deployed. If during the 33 minutes of one of his most finely sustained works to date, I found myself hankering for more boldly developmental procedures to cut across the textural uniformity of each majestic section, this is a measure of the expectations his music arouses.

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Weekend Competition

No 2395 Set by Maud Gracechurch

The NHS is going through a bad patch. Competitors are asked to supply suitably contemporary extracts from *Dr Finlay's Casebook* or any other similar popular brand of medical writing on the present troubles by 30 January.

Result of No 2392 Set by E. O. Parrott

Competitors were asked for extracts from *The Butlin Archipelago* etc.

Report by Zola Smith

A large but not very inspired entry. An extract, to be really effective, should be all too gruesomely possible; whereas too many competitors provided what might have been descriptions of an actual labour camp. £5 to each entry published.

'Strip'. Steven Cecilovitch Carstairs shuddered. The unventilated and overcrowded cattle plane, the endless wait at the arrival point where incomprehensible announcements had shattered every attempt at sleep, the first sight of the shabby and rickety huts, had still not prepared him for what was regarded by inmates with even greater loathing than the plastic tokens by which they measured their place in the pecking-order of the pig troughs: the animal nakedness that is the uniform of the *Clubmed*.

He stripped. The Mars Bar he had recklessly concealed in his hernia belt thudded to the ground. A whisper, louder than any screaming, stunned him; in an instant he was awash in a whirlpool of bodies scratching, kicking, biting . . . C. VITA-FINZI

On the second morning I looked out for Smithsov. He was sitting at a table, practising bingo calls for the afternoon's Group Elation Treatment. With tears in my eyes I approached him. 'Tell me, Smithsov. Is it true that a man can't be unhappy here?'

'Brownsov,' he replied with compassion in his voice. 'Unhappiness does not exist.' As he spoke, the Chief Redcoat roared from the end of the ward: 'Everybody happy?'

'Yes!' screamed the patients in unison. I glanced at Smithsov for reassurance and as I did so, his bowtie lit up and began to revolve at great speed. Simultaneously, the flower in his buttonhole squirted water in my face.

'Everybody happy?' I reflected. 'Of course we are.' TIM HOPKINS

But what remains when all else grows dim and is lost (thankfully! oh how thankfully!) to memory is that terrible expression uniform on so many faces, an expression which those passers-by who paused only fleetingly in their journey might even mistake for joy . . . Old men, once perfectly sane, are having their legs sat upon by oppressively loud singers; old women are being addressed in light-shrieking buildings in such terms! Such familiar terms! Outside, one would not dare address their very daughters in such terms! . . . What to do? Nothing. What hope? None. Your cooperation is assumed, taken for granted. Only one way remains: to sit by the wall, the thin, radio-transparent wall, counting the days, and reassuring yourself: 'Only fourteen, only fourteen.' And are other people kept here longer in this Western 'civilisation'? Perhaps when you get out you can do something for them, write about them. Perhaps . . . F. J. COOPER

Assiac

Chess Board

No 1365 School Competition

When scores of schools and colleges requested hundreds of entry-forms we had high hopes which, alas, were somewhat dashed. Surprisingly few entries and very few meriting an award. Should I blame myself for having set too difficult problems? Not so, say scores of our regulars – and not so regulars either – who seem to have got much fun out of it, apart from benefiting their ladder-accounts, most of them (and by no means the 'cracks' only) getting the optimum of 80 points.

As for those up to 14 sharing the special prize of £15, a lion's share of £6 is well deserved by Mark Holland (of Richard Hale Grammar School, Hertford) who had one failure only and got the other seven more or less right. The remaining £9 is shared by J. Hopkins (13) of Bolton County Grammar School Andrew and Richard Curtis, aged 11 and 12 respectively of St. Joseph's College, London (who'll have to share their £3 between them) and Manolis Tazartes (14) of the Moraitis School in Athens whose entries are excellent in quality but lacking in quantity. As for the boys at the top of the age range I regret to announce one award only, well deserved by W H. M. Lemney (16) of King's College, Taunton who, like two of the other boys, is an occasional competitor anyway. He left out one but did the other seven more or less flawlessly for him a £10 prize. A year's EG subscription to all prizewinners.

A future competition might not be limited to youngsters, unless (as I hope) my postbag in the next few weeks and months convinces me that there is, after all, a substantial number of those who would like to make the effort.

The 4-pointer for beginners is a game position in which White (playing Kth5) failed to exploit his advantage; it was Dr. Euwe's subsequent analysis which found a speedy and brilliant decision. For 6 ladder-points **B** is also a win speedily and brilliantly achieved. Helpful hint: *zugzwang*! **C** (for 7) is a stalemate achieved in 5 moves after some subtle do's and don'ts. Usual prizes, entries by 26 January.

A: Matulovic-Sacharov 1966: /r5ktb/1b3p1k/p2p1p1p/1p2rP2/5KtR1/1Kt1B2R1/q1PQ2PP/6K1/.

B: G. M. Kliakskin: /rR6/p7/KktPk4/P7/32/

C: A. S. Selesniev 1920: /1k6/1Pp2p2/8/KPp2p2/P7/8/5P2/8/.

Report on No 1362 *Set 26 December*

A: 1) f3,e5(6); 2) Kf2,Qf6; 3) Kg3,Qf3:†; 4 Kh4,Be7††.

B: None of the pawns can have made a capture and at least one of the pieces must have.

C: 1) e4,c5; 2) b4,cb:; 3) a3,Ktc6; 4) cb:,Ktf6 5) b5,Ktb8; 6) e5,Qc7 (threat to win Rook); **7) d4 Ktd5; 8) c4,Ktb6; 9) c5,Ktd5; 10) b6!** & wins easily after say, . . . Qd8; 11) Ra7:,Ra7:; 12) ba:,Ka5† 13) Ktc3!, etc.

D: White: **1) Ktf3† & ††;** Black: **1) . . . Ktg4† & ††.** White's suit: **1) c3†** etc. Black's: **1) . . . Re2†** etc.

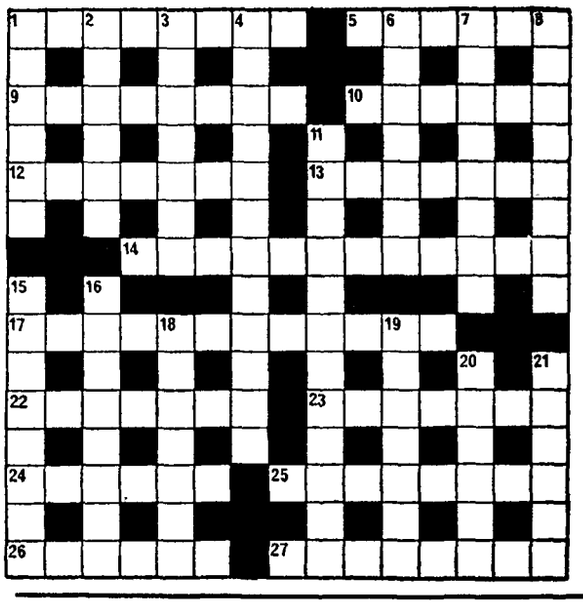
E: 1) Ktb6†,Kb8; 2) Bg3†,Ktd6; 3) Bd6:†,Kb7 4) Bd7††(Bc5? leads to loss after . . . Re8;), **Kb6: 5) Be5!,Rh4; 6) Bg3,Rd4!; 7) Bf2,Rad7:; 8)Kc3,Kc5 9) Be3!,** and Black has to sit tight.

F: 1) Ra2†,Kb5; 2) Rb2†,Ktb3!; 3) Rb3:†,Ka4; 4) Rb8!(Rb7?), **Qg3††; 5) Kf7,Qe5; 6) Ra1†!,Qa1:; 7 Ra8†,** etc.

Points-garnering galore. Prizes: S. N. Collings, J. P. Ford, J. Gill, 13-year-old Mark Holland, A. J. Sobey.

Weekend Crossword 1147

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1147, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1 7HJ, by first post 27 Jan.



ACROSS

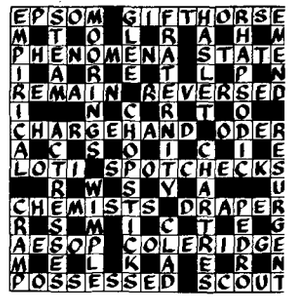
1. Ignore a feast (8).
5. Have a wager about a kind of horse or dog (6).
9. Fruit crop as it goes rotten (8).
10. Girl makes a first-class effort to pass back (6).
12. It is seen in the garden when Lamb gets behind a high ball (7).
13. In the back street are poor people needing work (7).
14. Inexperienced members but it is useful to have them in on the plot (5, 7).
17. Road which goes east in new Tory seat after reshuffle (3-3, 6).
22. Be better than gold, but not in the home (7).
23. It is mean to declare before time (7).
24. Extraordinarily hearty and unrefined (6).
25. Paid attention but was wrong about the weapon (8).
26. Spokesmen for a novelist (6).
27. Part of a building to give delight (8).

DOWN

1. Fine things which make a page superior to noblemen (6).
2. Writer who keeps a stall in the London area (6).
3. Of lips or eyes if one lost a second (7).
4. Not experienced when former right-winger encompasses the ruin of Nasser (12).
6. Order a meal in Monty's place (7).
7. Message about a case in Greek (8).
8. Cross when the Rest collapse and are about to declare (8).
11. Convincing proof that business house is in company with state (12).
15. There is nothing in wind instruments being used as headgear (8).
16. Coming from the Atlantic (8).
18. Someone else takes over when a throne collapses (7).
19. Eighteen-plus who make the sign of the cross (7)
20. The weapon for a detective (6).
21. 'No man ever talkec poetry 'cept a —— or boxin' day' (Dickens) (6)

SETSQUARI

Solution to No 1145


EPSOM GIFTHORSE
M T O L R A H M
PHENOMENA STATE
I A R E T L P N
REMAIN REVERSED
I N C R T O
CHARGEHAND ODER
A C S O I C I E
LOTI SPOTCHECKS
R W S Y A U
CHEMISTS DRAPER
R S M I C T E G
AESOP COLERIDGE
M E L K A E R N
POSSESSED SCOUT

Prizewinners to No 1145

Lorna Curtin (Sydney)

Mrs M. Imber (London N18)

J. Paterson (Quebec)

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The salary for both posts, according to age and experience, £3,009 - £3,702 plus £381 London Allowance per annum. 35 hour week. Contributory Superannuation Scheme. 4 weeks holiday. LVs.

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The Administrative Officer,
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Tel: 01-834 9434.

The closing date for the return of completed application forms is Friday, 6 February 1976.

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Only applicants with specialist collective bargaining experience need apply.

Further details of position and application form may be obtained from: **Clive Jenkins, General Secretary, ASTMS, 10-26a Jamestown Road, London NW1 7DT.**

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require a

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To manage Association's finances, including investment of funds, together with supervision of organising and educational work.

Ideally candidates should have experience of banking arrangements, investment, taxation, book-keeping and accounting, as well as an understanding of the law relating to Trade Union funds and accounts. Public speaking and ability to lecture at week-end schools and training courses will be an advantage. Applicant has to be a member of TUC affiliated union.

Salary: £5,685 per annum plus £482 per annum London Weighting. General Conditions of Service will be supplied on request.

Write giving details of career to date, age and experience and qualifications appropriate to the post to: **General Secretary, Transport Salaried Staffs' Association, Walkden House, 10 Melton Street, London NW1 2EJ,** marking your envelope 'Finance and Organising Officer's Vacancy'.

Closing date: first post, Thursday, 5 February 1976.

THE SOUTH-EAST REGIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD

for the Certificate of Secondary Education

Appointment of

ONE ASSISTANT EXAMINATIONS OFFICER

Salary: NJC Senior Officers' Scale Grades 1/2 within the range £4,239 — £4,992 per annum.

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The person appointed will form part of a team, each member of which takes responsibility for a group of subjects, servicing the subject panels and overseeing the examination and moderation of the subjects concerned, under Modes 1, 2 & 3.

Applicants should have a qualification in, or knowledge of, modern languages; possess administrative and, preferably, teaching experience; be available to take up duty by 1 May 1976.

Application forms and further particulars from The Secretary, The South-East Regional Examinations Board, 2 & 4 Mount Ephraim Road, ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS, Kent, TN1 1EU to whom completed applications should be returned by 6 February 1976.

JAZZ CENTRE SOCIETY

The Jazz Centre Society requires an

ADMINISTRATOR

to develop and promote jazz activities in the North of England. This is a new post, based in Manchester but frequent travel is involved.

A creative and strong interest in jazz music together with a proven administrative ability will be looked for. Starting salary will be in the range of £3,000 – £3,500 plus car allowance and expenses.

Curriculum vitae together with the names of two referees to be submitted to The Administrator, Jazz Centre Society, ICA, 12 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1 from whom further details may be obtained. Closing date for applications – 23 January.

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For full particulars write to the Director, at either of the following colleges –

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The Polytechnic, (Room 25)
Holly Bank Road,
HUDDERSFIELD, HD3 3BP

Garnett College, (Room 25)
Downshire House,
Roehampton Lane,
LONDON SW15 4HR

College of Education (Technical), (Room 25)
Chadwick Street,
BOLTON, BL2 1JW

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AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF PACIFIC STUDIES

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The Centre is interested in appointing a person who is qualified to carry out research in areas such as Australian defence policy, strategic theory and the strategic balance in the Pacific region. The Centre, headed by Dr Robert O'Neill, is a focus for discussion of strategic and defence interests of members of the University and is physically located in the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies.

Appointment will be for two years in the first instance.

Closing Date: 13 February 1976.

SALARY as Research Fellow will be in accordance with qualifications and experience within the range $A12,063 - $16,084 p.a. OTHER CONDITIONS: Reasonable travel expenses are paid. Superannuation benefits are available.

The University reserves the right to make an appointment by invitation or, due to financial stringencies or some other sufficient reason, not make an appointment at any time.

Prospective candidates should write to the Association of Commonwealth Universities (Appts), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H OPF for further particulars before applying.

TORY COMMUNITY WORK

Two more

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS

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The work is challenging with much scope for personal initiative.

Applications are invited from younger people with experience in the political, educational or voluntary spheres. Salaries up to £3,500. One post is London based.

Applications to: The Director of Community Affairs, Conservative Central Office, 32 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HH.

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Application forms (to be returned by 29 January) and Job Description from the Personnel Department, The Royal Free Hospital, 21 Pond Street, NW3. Telephone: 01-794 0431.

THE INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS

Applications are invited for the post of Secretary, which will be vacant at the end of July, on the retirement of the present holder.

Candidates should be between the ages of 35 and 50 and should offer experience in company administration and staff management, as well as first-hand knowledge of the academic world and the conduct of examinations.

Linguistic qualifications an advantage, but not essential.

Starting salary in the region of £4,000, according to age and experience.

Applications, giving full details of qualifications and previous experience, should be sent not later than 1 February, 1976, and should be addressed to the Secretary, Institute of Linguists, 91 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BN, marked 'Personal and Confidential'.

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TEA, A CHAT AND A JOB at the Winifred Johnson Office Staff Bureau, 118 New Bond Street. W1 (opp. Fenwick's). 493 3005.

Studentships

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Applications are invited from Graduates of the University of London for the following Studentships for full-time research in any subject.

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Awards

Greater London Arts Association

Visual Arts Awards

In 1976 Greater London Arts Association will be offering a total of £6,000 in awards of £250 and £500 for work in the Visual Arts.

Applications are invited from:-

★ **Visual Artists working** in any medium and living in Greater London: to enable the artist to set aside time for concentrated work and/or to purchase materials.

★ **Art critics and researchers** in art services living in Greater London: to enable a specific project to be undertaken which, in their present situation, is not feasible.

Students are not eligible for these awards, nor are those in receipt (in 1975/76) of £250 or more from a major funding body.

Applicants will be selected for award by the Association's Visual Arts Panel whose members will speak with as many applicants as possible to ensure that applications are clearly understood and assessed.

Further information can be obtained from:
Caryn Faure Walker
Visual Arts Officer
Greater London Arts Association
25/31 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9SF

Closing date for receipt of applications is 8 March, 1976.

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Meetings

TIBET SOCIETY, 46 Belgrave Square, SW1. Tomorrow 10.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m. 'Introductory Open Day'. All welcome. Mon.-Fri. 9.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m., details of facilities & programmes on Tibetan Civilisation & Religion on request. 01-235 3720.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: A lecture entitled: 'Information Agreeements: A Study in Comparative Competition Law' will be given by Professor Gerd Rinck (Gottingen) on 22 January 1976 at University College (Small Chemistry Lecture Theatre), Gordon Street, London WC1 at 5 p.m. Admission free, without ticket. Academic Registrar.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON (Gower St, WC1E 6BT). The Freud Memorial Lectures in Psychoanalysis by Professor Roy Schafer. Admission free without ticket. 5.30 p.m. 26 Jan. – 'Free Association'. 2 Feb. – 'Self-Control'. 9 Feb. – 'Impotence, Frigidity and Sexism'. 16 Feb. – 'Self-Love and Self-Hatred'.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, Gower St, WC1E 6BT. Lunch Hour Lectures, 1.20 to 2. Admission free. 20 Jan. 'Marx and Heine – a strange friendship' by Professor C. Abramsky; 22 Jan. 'Science and Culture – a seventeenth century debate' by Professor P. M. Rattansi.

AFRICAN LITERATURE. Evening classes with Lewis Nkosi, S. African writer and critic. 6.30 p.m. Thur. 22 Jan.-25 March. Africa Centre, 38 King St. W.C.2. 836 1973.

THEODOR HERZL Society & London Univ. (EMD), 57 Eton Ave, NW3. Tues. 20 Jan. 8.15 p.m. History of The Holy Land, 1st lecture. Dr. M. Gertner: 'The Biblical Period - Deborah, David, Solomon'. Refreshments. Small charge.

YOUNG MAPAM: 'The Tragedy of Cyprus': Steve Panteli, lecturer in history at London University, will speak on the events leading to the continuing crisis on the island as well as its broader implications. Venue: 37 Broadhurst Gardens, NW6. (Nearest tube Finchley Rd). Sun. 18 Jan. at 8 p.m. All welcome.

AFRICA CENTRE: 'Deculturalisation through Education'. Talk on negative aspects of schooling for kids of minority groups. 6.30 p.m. Thurs. 22 Jan. 38 King St, WC2. 836 1973. Adm. 40p, Students 25p.

ALBANIA: SOCIALISM IN EUROPE. Talk, 'History of the Party of Labour'. Sun. 18 Jan. at 7 p.m. at Artists for Democracy, 143 Whitfield St, W1. (Warren St tube).

BUDDHISM. Talk & discussion. Sundays 4.30 p.m. BBA, The Meeting House, Heath St, Hampstead. Sun. 18 Jan. Dr Walpola Rahula: 'The Buddha as Historical and Symbolic Figure'. (I).

'CHURCH AND STATE': T. F. Evans. Sun. 18 Jan. 11 a.m. Tuesday Discussion on theme 'Is Dr Coggan Right'? Tues. 20 Jan. 7 p.m. South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. 01-242 8032/3.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 17 Jan. 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 20 Jan. 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 21 Jan. 6.30 p.m. 'Buddhism & Animism' – Douglas Barrow-Burt. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full prog.

THEOSOPHY. Public Talk & Questions. Sun. 18 Jan. 8 p.m. Free. 'The Origin of Evil'. S.a.e. for programme, book list & literature. ULT. 62 Queen's Gdns. W2.

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'DIARY OF A CHILEAN Concentration Camp' by Hernan Valdes, is a terrifying first-hand account of the author's imprisonment and torture by the present regime in Chile. Available from all good bookshops in hardback £4, or paperback £2. Gollancz.

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Theatres

ALMOST FREE THEATRE. Susannah York in 'The Great Ban' by Mike Wells. Mon.-Sat. 8.15 p.m. 485 6224.

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NEW END (Hampstead Tube). 435 4116. Richard Crane's 'Clownmaker', a story of Nijinsky, Diaghilev & the Ballets Russe. Opens tonight 7.0, subs 8.0. Not Mons.

OLD VIC. The National Theatre. 928 7616. Tonight & Tues. 7, tomorrow 2, 'Hamlet'. Uncut text runs 4 hours, note early start. Tomorrow 8, Mon. 7.30, Thurs. 2.15 & 7.30 'Plunder'.

ROYAL COURT. 730 1745. Colin Blakely in 'Judgement' by Barry Collins. A National Theatre production directed by Peter Hall. 'Superlatively delivered' from Punch. For 2 wks only. 19 Jan. at 7, subs 8. No perf. 28 Jan.

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TOWER. Canonbury Place, N1. British premiere of Lanford Wilson's off-Broadway success 'The Hot L Baltimore', until 17 Jan. at 7.30. Booking: 226 5111 (2.15 p.m.-9 p.m., Mons 6.30 p.m.-9 p.m.).

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WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY: Rarely shown historical film 'Struggle For China', containing unusual archive film material. Holborn Central Library Hall, Theobalds Road, London WC1. 7.30 p.m. Inquiries: SACU, 152 Camden High St, NW1. Telephone 01-485 8236.

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